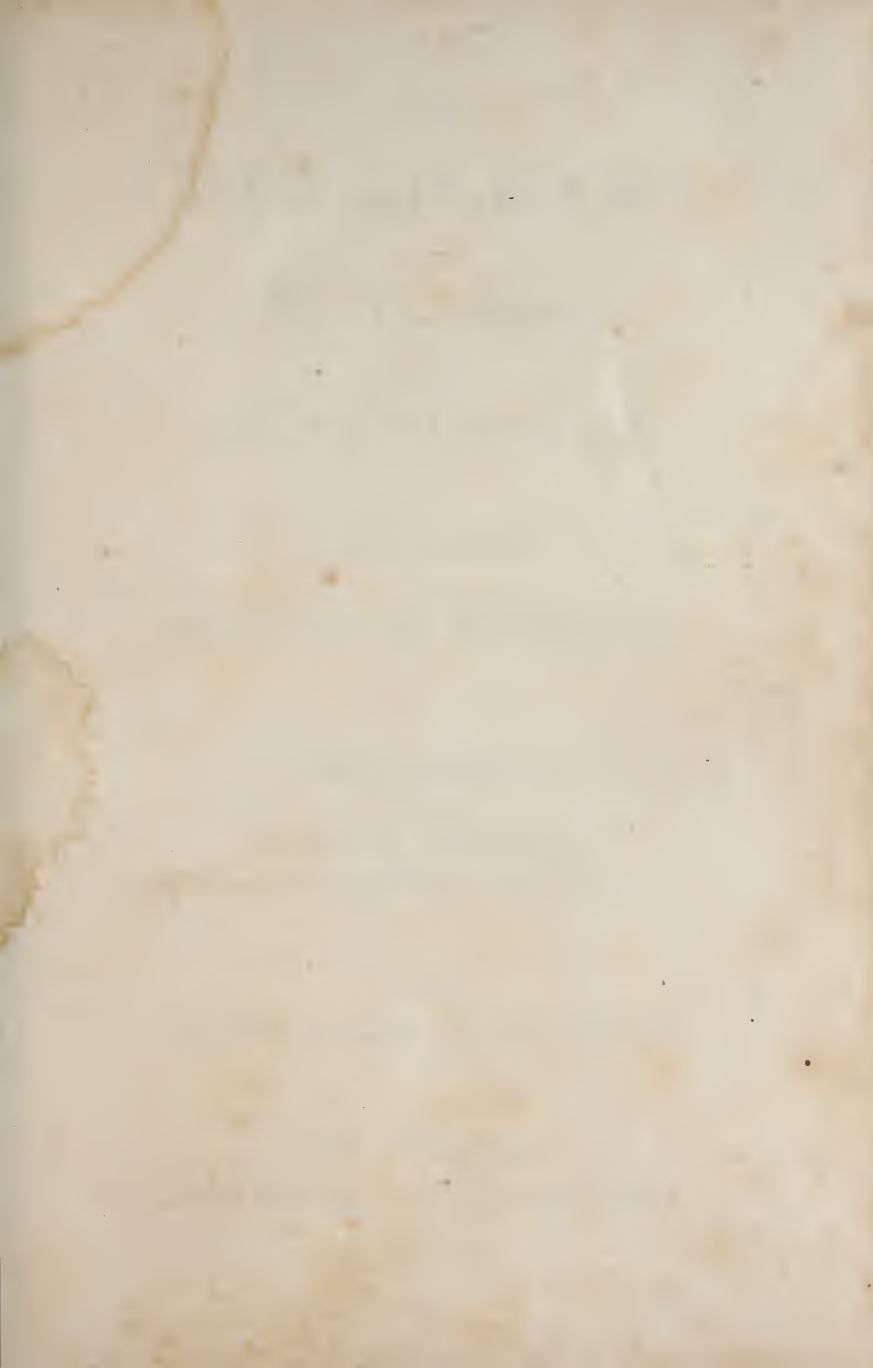


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THE
BLIND GIRL
OF
WITTENBERG:
A
LIFE-PICTURE
OF
THE TIMES OF
Luther and the Reformation.

From the German,
BY
JOHN G. MORRIS,
PASTOR OF THE FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH, BALTIMORE.

FOR THE
LUTHERAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

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P R E F A C E.



ALL the facts here presented in this highly-interesting "LIFE-PICTURE" are supposed to have occurred within the first ten years of the Reformation in Germany; and, although the plot is fictitious, *every word which Luther is made to utter has been spoken by him in some other connexion*, so that we have the *very language* of the Reformer most skilfully woven into an attractive story, that cannot but tend to improve the leisure moments devoted to "THE BLIND GIRL OF WITTENBERG."

J. G. M.

THE
BLIND GIRL OF WITTENBERG.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST INTERVIEW.

And when they cast up the account of their sins, they shall come with fear; and their own iniquities shall convince them to their face.

WISDOM, iv. 20.

IN the afternoon of a beautiful June day of the year 1527, a young man passed through the Elb gate of Wittenberg, and inquired of the keeper for the residence of the wood-carver, Homberg. Having received the information, he turned his steps towards the designated place, and soon stood before the house of the artist.

As he entered the passage, he encountered a young woman, simply and almost coarsely attired, whom he took to be the servant of the family. He perceived that, as she approached him, she inclined her head towards her breast, as though she would avoid his sight. When he also observed that, with extended hands, she carefully felt her way along the wall, in a tone of sympathy he said, "Poor girl, I see you are blind!"

Moved by the tender tone of his voice, she raised her sightless eyes towards the youth and replied, "*Blind I*

certainly am, but not on that account *poor*. May I ask, Sir, whom you wish to see?"

"The carver, Homberg," said he.

"Proceed through this passage," she continued, "as far as the back door; then turn to the right, and you will find the door of his work-room open."

The young man cast another look of admiration upon her, and shaking his head as expressive of doubt and anxiety, he turned towards the work-shop. When he entered, he found the old master sitting at a table covered with hammers, chisels, and knives. His grey head was supported on his hand, and he was so deeply absorbed in thought, that he did not observe the entrance of the stranger. The greatest disorder reigned in the place. In one corner lay rough pieces of wood piled on one another in wild confusion; in another were seen, partly unfinished, partly broken statues of saints and other figures. On another table were lying mutilated papers, and fragments of designs and sketches, covered with dust and chips of wood. Add to these the forbidding aspect of the master, and one may well suppose it required some courage in a stranger to enter such a place.

The young man stood silent for some time, in the expectation of being observed; he then made a slight motion with his foot, to rouse the master from his dream. He started up as if alarmed, and with a scowl upon the stranger, he asked, "Who are you? How came you here? Who conducted you to this place?"

"Pardon me, Sir, if I have alarmed you, or if I have come at an unfavorable time," replied the stranger, in a tone of kind entreaty. "I inquired for you at the front door, and a blind servant directed me this way."

"A blind servant?" repeated the old man, angrily; but he soon restrained himself, and continued in a more subdued, but evidently bitter spirit; "But you are right; Margaret is a blind servant; blind in body and soul, she does not know how a stranger should be introduced. Have you come perhaps to make an engagement for a piece of work?"

"Pardon me, venerable Sir," replied the young man; "I am too poor to buy the productions of your chisel; I have come rather to aid you in your work, and to perfect myself in the art of wood-sculpture under your masterly instruction."

When he heard this, he smiled bitterly, and replied, "Then you have just come at the proper time. I have just been thinking of carving a statue of St. Antony of Padua, and representing him as having gone through the world with his bag on his back, and starving here in Wittenberg. You can help me in that work," continued he, with increasing bitterness, "unless you prefer to hew up these blocks and these wooden saints for fire-wood next winter! They will then be of some service still!"

The stranger stood alarmed before the old man, and after an effort could only say, "I am truly sorry that my unexpected entrance has offended you. It was not my design, and again I beg your pardon."

"There's no necessity to ask for pardon," continued Homberg, more calmly; "I only wished to tell you that you are young enough to adopt some other profession for a livelihood; for if you expect to support yourself by this, I would advise you, first of all, to carve for yourself a beggar's staff, for you will want to use it soon enough."

"Are the prospects of our beautiful art really so bad?"

asked the youth. "I have already worked at several places, and found employment enough."

"And why did you not stay there?" said the old master. "If you think that here in Wittenberg our beautiful art, as you properly designate it, is as highly esteemed, or as extensively patronized as at other places, you are mistaken. In this place, Luther has taken good care that sculptors shall go to the almshouse, if they do not wish to starve."

"Luther, you say?" cried out the youth, whilst a deep glow mantled his cheeks, "What has the affair of Luther, which only concerns the church and religion, to do with art?"

"A great deal, I tell you," sharply replied Homberg, and with newly awakened bitterness; "Luther is taking away from us masters and workmen our daily bread, and offers as a substitute what he calls, heavenly bread. Are you satisfied with this substitute, when your body is perishing with hunger and thirst? See here, young man! ten years ago I worked in this shop with five journeymen, and then I could not meet all my engagements. But since Carlstadt has hurled all the images out of the churches, and Luther, if he could, would also throw out all other decorations and altars, since that, I have not work enough even for myself, and it's hard for an old man to be suffering anxiety about his daily bread."

"It may be," replied the young man, "that the new faith which rejects the adoration of saints, will interfere somewhat with our art; but it is everywhere said, that Luther has severely rebuked the intemperate zeal of Carlstadt, and has taught that pictures and images may be used without injury; for in themselves they are neither

good nor bad, if we only do not trust in them. And even if images of the virgin and the other saints are no longer set up in the churches, surely those of Christ and his apostles will only be the more numerous."

"I observe," rejoined Homberg, sternly, "that you are infected with the new faith, and already on that account there can be little communion between us."

"You are too severe in your judgment, Sir," said the young man. "If I dare not deny that much which I hear of the new faith does not seem to be objectionable, yet I am still a good Catholic Christian; and even this morning, in a village near this city, I attended mass. If you could give me some work, only for a year, I would serve you without pay. I wish to learn from you, for you have been represented to me as a finished master in our glorious art. I can also say that I do not come here without recommendation!"

At these words, the young man took from the side-pocket of his mantle, a book ornamented with silver clasps, which he opened with the pressure of his hand, and taking from it a letter, presented it to Homberg.

"Not so fast, young man!" cried he; "your words do not exactly harmonize; you call yourself poor, and yet everything that I see about you betokens affluence; and if you are willing to work for me without pay, your poverty cannot be pressing. And then you want to be a good Catholic Christian, and yet you eulogize this Luther, who will at last himself be consumed in the fire which he has kindled; for he can no longer extinguish it. All those for whom the holy mother church is too strict, and the government too severe, are running after him. How now do your expressions correspond?"

"You are dealing severely with me," said the youth; "believe at least that I am acting honestly with regard to you and our profession. Put me on trial, and see whether I am worthy of becoming a master under your instruction. But will you not read this letter first?"

Homberg took the letter into his hand with a sullen aspect, broke the seal, and read it with a wrinkled brow. "Your name is Leonard Fichtner?" he asked, whilst a restless, suspicious glance, shot through his eyes. "Do you speak Italian?" he then suddenly inquired, whilst the mouldering spark of a painful reminiscence shot up into a burning flame.

The young man's cheeks reddened, and, after some hesitation, he replied, "My name is Leonard Fichtner, and I have lived some time in Italy."

"And," said Homberg, suddenly interrupting him, "in Italian your name is Leonardo Pinetta?"

The young man, during this time, had, with great exertion, recovered his composure. He now assumed an unsuspecting and friendly tone, and said, "I observe, Sir, that you also are acquainted with the Italian language, and doubtless better than I am. But I can assure you that I am more pleased with my real domestic name than with the Italian translation of it. But will you not pay some regard to the recommendation which the honored master Urban of Augsburg had thought me worthy of? He told me so much good of you, that you will not surely turn me away when I ask you for work. He has told me often, how you and he worked together in the same shop for years, and loved each other as brothers."

During this conversation, old Homberg had walked up and down in a state of uneasy excitement, and was evi-

dently contending against conflicting thoughts. He finally stood still before the young man, gave back the letter, and said, "No; it will not do; I cannot give you any work. You must go on further; you had better return to Urban at Augsburg; you can there learn better than from me. But I will not send you away without some refreshment. Come with me!"

Without waiting for a reply, Homberg led the way into the family living-room.

"Catharine,"—said he, to a young lady who was sitting at the window examining the contents of a small casket—"Catharine, prepare some refreshment."

The lady, alarmed at the unexpected entrance of the young and handsome man, cast a hasty glance at him, and left the room.

"I shall be with you presently," said Homberg; "sit down in the meantime,"—and he also left the apartment.

"I fear it will all be in vain!" said Leonard to himself. "How powerful must the voice of the guilt of so many years since still be, that in the first moment he suspected what I intended should be concealed from him for a long time yet." He walked to and fro, absorbed in deep reflection, and only after some time he discovered that he was not alone. In a corner, half-concealed by the stove, he observed a form which sat still before a spinning-wheel; the head was sunk on the breast. Leonard immediately recognized the blind girl whom Homberg had called Margaret. He feared he had been overheard in his soliloquy, and felt it necessary as far as possible to prevent a misapplication of his words. He turned to the girl and said,

"Your name is Margaret, as Mr. Homberg has said?"

"Yes, Sir," she replied.

"And you are at service in this house?" continued the young man; "how can you do that, being blind?"

"They have patience with me!" said she. "Father and sister are satisfied with what I can do!"

"How! father and sister?" cried out Leonard, alarmed; "are you Mr. Homberg's daughter, and is Miss Catharine, as I have heard her called, your sister?"

"Yes, Sir," replied Margaret; "why are you so surprised?"

The most painful emotions were displayed in the countenance of the young man. When he compared the simple dress of Margaret with the costly and dazzling attire of Catharine, and thought of the contemptuous language in which her father had spoken of his own child, an involuntary shudder filled his heart. He earnestly gazed on the poor girl; with deep interest he regarded her marble-white yet full and expressive face; he advanced towards her, and grasping her hand, said, "Miss Margaret, you do not know me, and you cannot even judge from my countenance that I am an honest man, but still you can rely upon me! A few minutes ago, thinking I was alone, I uttered some things which I do not wish to be told; will you promise to keep them to yourself?"

"You certainly can have no evil design against us," replied Margaret; "the tone of your language gives evidence of that. I heard every word you spoke; but as you desire it, I shall never betray you."

"Margaret," he continued, "the ways of God are wonderful, but He does all things well. He has deprived you of sight, but only that your heart might be illuminated with more brilliant light. You can now give proof of your

confidence in me. I wish to procure employment from your father; but he refuses me. Speak a good word for me, so that I may remain here."

The poor girl withdrew her hand, smiled painfully, and said, "I am but a poor girl, and my intercession would do you more harm than good. Secure the interest of my sister Catharine, and you will accomplish your object. Pay no regard to me, and you will succeed the better."

Fichtner was about to reply, when Homberg entered the room. He had laid aside his workman's apron and put on a more genteel dress. "You said" — turning to the stranger — "that you have been in Italy: were you in Rome? did you work there?"

"I have been in Rome!" replied Fichtner; "but let me candidly tell you, I wish I had never been there. What I gained there in my profession I lost in my faith."

"What do you mean?" hurriedly asked the master. Catharine's entrance with the refreshments interrupted the conversation. The stranger was invited to partake of "the homely fare," as Homberg called it, and remarked, "You have doubtless travelled a good distance to-day, and you will need strength for to-day and to-morrow. If you have no objections, I will give you a letter to Master Urban of Augsburg."

"It does not become me to oppose you," replied Fichtner: "I shall go out of the gate with deep regret through which I entered with such high hopes. Yes, venerable sir, you cannot conceive how you have blasted my most cherished expectations. For months past I have thought of myself as being in your work-room, laboring under your direction, and going out as a master of my profession. But it is all over now!"

With every word of Leonard the displeasure of Homberg rose. "I am not accustomed," said he, in a cold and reproachful tone, "to be opposed in my own house. I have already told you that I can give you no work, and I had hoped to part with you in peace. Take some of this poor refreshment, and then proceed further."

This was surely not a very cordial invitation, and Fichtner showed no disposition to partake of it. He looked sadly on the floor, and then threw a hasty glance on Margaret, who was seated, motionless, at her spinning-wheel. A painful pause ensued, which was interrupted by Catharine, who, with a deep crimson tint on her cheek, turned to her father, and, in a tone of flattering softness, said, "Dear Father, you will surely not be displeased when I remind you that this very day a highly elaborate altar has been bespoken, — do you not need help in executing such a piece of work as that?"

The old master angrily replied, "Child, what nonsense you are speaking!" But as his eye fell on his daughter, his excitement subsided at once. He suddenly changed his abrupt manner, and more calmly continued "I know, Catharine, that your intentions are good, but still you have spoken thoughtlessly. Excuse me," turning to the youth, "I need fresh air. If you should not leave town until to-morrow, call on me again for a moment; I wish to see you about the letter to Urban."

With this he left the room a second time, in a state of high excitement, which he was vainly endeavoring to subdue.

Fichtner rose at the same time. "I came here," he said, "at a very unfavorable time. Accept my thanks, Miss Catharine, for the offer of this refreshment; but you

will understand why I cannot partake of it. I shall be satisfied with the privilege of calling again to-morrow. May God be with you."

He bowed to Catharine, cast a furtive glance on the blind girl, and with a beating heart left the house.

CHAPTER II.

THE GATHERING AT THE BLACK EAGLE.

But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. — 1 THESS. ii, 2.

IN the beginning of the 16th century, the Black Eagle, in College Street in Wittenberg, was the house of entertainment specially patronized by all pilgrims to Rome and other sacred places, whose way led through Wittenberg. The landlord, Paul Shulte, had been twice to Rome, in his younger days, for the purpose of fulfilling a vow, and on his return had established this house for the benefit of those who desired information on pilgrimages and other interesting subjects. The number of pilgrim guests had been sadly diminished by the rise of the Reformation, but this was compensated by the numerous visitors whom Luther's reputation invited to Wittenberg, and who generally put up at that hotel. This was the reason why many

inhabitants of the city, who loved to hear the tales of travellers, spent their evenings in the capacious guest-room of Paul Shulte.

When Leonard Fichtner had left the house of old Homberg he felt a strong desire for refreshment, and on inquiry after comfortable lodgings, he was recommended to turn in at the Black Eagle.

On his entrance into the large room, he had doubts whether he could find entertainment in that house. All the benches and chairs were occupied, and mostly by young men, whom, from their ornamented vests, short Spanish cloaks, and wide shirt-collars, he readily recognized as students. Here and there sat a few old men, in broad lapelled coats, who were listening intently to a young man of a military aspect, whom we shall designate as the Lieutenant, who occupied the head of the long table, and who seemed to be conducting the conversation.

The attentive landlord immediately advanced towards the newly-entered guest, and assured him that he could be comfortably accommodated with quarters. As all the other places were occupied, he conducted him to a small table in one corner of the room, quite isolated from the rest, at which only two men were seated.

One of these men wore a light-green velvet cap; his face was ornamented with a well-fostered beard, and he appeared to be about fifty years of age. The other was much younger: he had a very demure, yet mild and amiable aspect, and was listening attentively to the speaker at the head of the large table.

"Gentlemen," said Paul Shulte, "I am sure you will permit this young man, a newly-arrived guest, a seat at your table!"

The permission was politely granted, and Fichtner took his seat at their side.

The confused conversation at the long table, which had, in the mean time, filled the room, had now subsided into silence, and the loud and clear voice of the speaker, designated above, alone was heard.

“Now,” said he, “the affair is singular enough, and as I witnessed it from beginning to end, I can give you a faithful narrative of it. You know that our illustrious Elector, John Frederick, when he recently went to Dusseldorf to betroth himself to Sybille, daughter of Duke John of Cleve, took with him, among other distinguished cavaliers and a numerous retinue of servants, our dear brother Frederick Myconius, as his chaplain, who daily preached in the chamber of the prince, in the castle; and I must tell you how this man of God dealt such heavy blows, that all who heard him became ashamed of the popish abominations, and embraced the true Gospel. I can hardly believe that our Doctor Martin himself wields a sharper sword. Among other Franciscans at Dusseldorf, there was one named John Korbach, who boasted that with ten articles he could extinguish the Gospel, and drive our Reformation heroes from the field. On a certain Sunday, he furiously assailed Myconius and all who coincided with him; he shamefully abused the new preachers, as he called them, and recited the ten articles, which he declared must be received and believed, or no man could be saved. Then,—”

“Allow me to ask, Lieutenant,” said one of the company, interrupting him, “whether you can repeat these ten articles?”

“Certainly,” said he, “it was nothing but the old lea-

ven — the authority of the Church, and Tradition were the first, and then followed the Invocation of Saints, the Mass, Pilgrimages, Salvation by good works, Monasticism and other dogmas, directly in opposition to the Gospel. At the end of his harangue, he said, that if any one could convince him of error from the Scriptures, he would yield. That pleased me and many others. Among the cavaliers there was one whom you all know, Baron von Wildenfels, a noble-minded and courageous gentleman, and a faithful confessor of the Gospel; he sent me to the Franciscan with this message, that, as he was not opposed to the investigation of the Scriptures, he should come and hear Myconius preach, and that he should have liberty to correct our preacher if he taught anything wrong or unscriptural. But Korbach felt no inclination for such an encounter, although I was authorized to tell him that he would be kindly treated, that his rights would be respected, and that, if he desired it, a regular discussion would be held between them. But I could accomplish nothing, and it was only after I went the second time, and Myconius himself had sent him a similar invitation, that the monk assumed the courage to meet him. The place of the discussion was appointed on the last of February, in the quarters of Baron von Wildenfels. You should have seen what a multitude of people streamed to the place at the designated hour! First, our illustrious Elector and the majority of his councillors, as well as a large number of the officers and cavaliers of the Duke of Cleve. Besides these, many learned men and citizens of Cleve, and soldiers with helmet and sword crowded the capacious room; and, although a cold, raw wind was blowing at the time, the

doors had to be left open on account of the multitude of people."

"Proceed, Lieutenant," cried the impatient hearers, as the speaker stopped a moment for breath. "Your narrative is so exciting that we feel as if we also could strike heavy blows."

"I felt just so myself," he continued, "when I saw the Franciscan standing there and looking upon Myconius with a proud, disdainful air, like a lion on a lamb which he is about to tear in pieces. But you could easily observe which party had the truth on its side. Myconius began the contest, and in a few words stated the importance of attaining to a correct understanding of the Divine Word, and exhorted the monk, even in a fraternal spirit, not to cling to his own preconceived opinion, but honestly to investigate the truth, whether it be for or against his opinions. He then turned to the audience and entreated them to be attentive, and that if anything was said which was not accordant with the Scriptures, they should observe it and condemn it. Now, that was acting in a truly Christian spirit, but the monk was not satisfied with it; he became incensed, and it was evident to all present that he was agitated with the most violent passion. He addressed Myconius in the most contemptuous manner, and severely censured him for presuming to discuss such Scriptural subjects in the presence of soldiers and servants. He maintained that it was only the learned who should determine such questions, and concluded by challenging Myconius to meet him on the arena of controversy, in Cologne."

"Ha, ha!" cried a voice from the company, "In Cologne the venerable John Pfefferkorn, *olim Judæus nunc*

optimus Christianus (once a Jew, now the best Christian), as he is called in the *epistolae obscurorum*, would have boldly stood up for him!"

"Yes, to excommunicate him or sentence him to the stake!" said the Lieutenant, smiling, and then continued, "But Myconius did not permit himself to be thrown off his guard, and maintained, on the authority of the Word of God, that we must determine all religious questions by the Scriptures; that these subjects ought to be discussed in the presence of everybody, and that from the decision of the Bible there was no appeal. He quoted a passage from the gospel of John, but I must confess that both the language and the place have escaped me."

"Was it not," enquired the young man beside whom Fichtner was sitting, "was it not, perhaps, the 12th chapter, where Christ says 'He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.'"

"You are right, dear sir, those were the words," replied the Lieutenant, agreeably surprised. "It is likely you also were present; and may I take the liberty of asking who you are?"

"Why," cried one of his nearest neighbors, "do you not know Master Veit Dietrich, Dr. Luther's private secretary and confidential friend?"

"Are you Veit Dietrich?" said the Lieutenant, turning towards him. "It affords me great pleasure to see you; and if I were not in the service of our illustrious Elector, I would like to have your post, and serve Dr. Luther with tongue, and heart, and pen, and property and blood, as

you do. God bless you, Mr. Veit Dietrich. You are a man of honor!"

The Secretary blushed deep red to the very eyes; he smiled humbly, and slowly shook his head. "You are too complimentary," said he, "but will you not proceed with your narrative? The Doctor has heard a different report of this affair, and he will be pleased to have a correct account."

"It occurred precisely as I state it!" replied the Lieutenant; "Myconius read the passage of Scripture from Luther's translation, and when the monk ascertained that, he cried out, that the devil had made that translation, and it was an abomination to a Catholic Christian; and then he wanted to show from the Book of Deuteronomy that the priests were commanded to decide controversies in matters of faith, after due reflection. But Myconius showed, at the same time, that the monk was beating the air, by demonstrating from the beginning of the same chapter, that the priests were bound to decide according to the Divine Law, and not according to their own judgment, and that thus the Bible alone was the final arbiter in matters of faith. And as the monk was silenced on this point, Myconius began to examine his ten articles by the light of Scripture, especially the two first, which treated of the Church, as elevated above the Bible, and as alone possessing authority to expound it, and of Tradition as of equal validity with the Scriptures. He so completely demolished these positions with passages from the Word of God, that everybody silently responded yea and amen to it. And as Myconius quoted these passages from Luther's translation, which the monk had denounced as the work of the devil, he handed to a learned gentleman pre-

sent, who did not belong to our party, a Latin Bible, with the request to look up the passages quoted, and if his quotation did not coincide with the Latin text, to announce it before the whole assembly. But the monk was not satisfied with this, and began to storm and revile in an outrageous manner, and among other things said, 'It is evident, Fritz Myconius, that you are possessed with many devils, and if I only had you alone at another place I would cudgel you black and blue.'

At these words, loud laughter resounded through the room, in which all present joined.

"But that is not all," continued the narrator: "the frantic Franciscan, in the mean time, cudgelled our poor Myconius with words, and charged him with preaching in Dusseldorf without authority; and that, like all other apostate monks, he had married a wife; expecting, no doubt, to gain the victory by such stupid revilings, and particularly to arraign our dear Dr. Martin Luther. Why, the monk went so far as to accuse Myconius of having excited, or at least promoted, the rising of the peasants by his sermons. At this juncture, the noble Baron von Wildenfels stood up for the slandered preacher, and testified that Myconius, on the other hand, had kept back his hearers from insurrection, and had exhorted them to submit to the Government, adding, that Muntzer, and other seditious preachers, were not of the same religious school to which Myconius belonged."

"Yes, yes," cried one of the hearers, "Muntzer has injured our sacred cause greatly, and has brought us into disrepute as rebels against the Government. Where the Lord builds a church, the devil will erect a chapel close beside it."

“But the Lord always tears them down again,” added the Lieutenant, and continued, “As Korbach could not resist such honest testimony, he introduced another controverted point, the Invocation of Saints, and tried to substantiate it from the Scriptures. But it was a curious spectacle to see the poor Franciscan opening the Bible here and there, and yet not being able to find what suited his purpose. He became quite troubled and confused, so that everybody laughed outright, especially when he said he would produce the proofs at another time, for we all know that there is nothing in the Bible on the subject. At this, the monk became enraged beyond measure; he abandoned the discussion abruptly, and called out to Myconius, ‘Fritz, tell me what your faith is?’ Now, friends and brethren, now the glory of the Gospel—the triumph of our sacred cause shone forth. Scarcely had the monk asked the question, when Myconius rose, full of the Holy Ghost, as was Stephen when he was stoned to death, and bore such testimony to our faith, as if Dr. Martin himself had spoken it. I was so deeply impressed with it that when I returned to my chamber I wrote down as much of it as I could remember; and when I ascertained that others had done the same thing, I compared my notes with theirs, and thus I have got the whole discourse correctly. If you have no objection, I will read it to you.”

“Certainly, Lieutenant,” they all cried out, “let us hear it.”

The Lieutenant then drew a paper from his pocket, and commenced reading to a very attentive audience, “The Gospel Testimony of Frederick Myconius.”

The discourse was a simple and scriptural exposition of the method of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. It exhi-

bited the leading doctrines of the Bible in a distinct manner, but dwelt particularly on the nature and evil of sin; the demands of the law; the inability of man to satisfy them; the nature and necessity of the atonement; the character and work of Christ; faith and repentance, and the operations of the Holy Spirit. He refuted some of the prominent errors of the church of Rome, but it was all done so kindly, meekly, and scripturally, that it won the admiration of all who heard it preached.

When the Lieutenant had finished the reading, and had returned the manuscript to his pocket, his hearers began to breathe and move more freely; for during the perusal all were motionless and silent as death, as they drank in with thirsty spirits this blessed truth.

"Just as silently and attentively as you have listened to my reading," continued the Lieutenant, "was the sermon heard by all present at Dusseldorf; and if, dear friends and brethren, you have until now been either amused or displeased with the Franciscan, you will look on him more favorably when I tell you what impression the discourse made on him. Whilst Myconius was speaking, as it were with the tongue of an apostle, I closely watched the monk, and I was extremely gratified to observe his angry countenance gradually assume a more amiable and humble expression. When Myconius had finished, Korbach rose, and in a tone quite unusual to him, said, "Dear Fritz, I have listened to you with much pleasure; I can find no fault with your discourse; I coincide with it all, for it is based on the true foundation. If you always preach thus, you preach the true Christian faith."

The Baron von Wildenfels then said to the monk, "But,

good man, do you not see that you are not consistent, for you are opposing your own principles?"

"How is that, Sir?" asked Korbach.

"Because you," replied the Baron, "have before said that Fritz was a heretic, and all his doctrines were heretical and devilish; but now you confess that they are true and Christian."

To this the monk replied he had heard that Myconius taught errors and blasphemed the mother of God and the saints, but that now he had heard differently; he was glad of it, and would now himself maintain his cause wherever he went. "But," he continued, "I beg of you not to abuse me, or give out that I have been conquered, or that you should regard this affair as a discussion, but only as a conversation; for there was no judge present."

To this Myconius replied, "Dear brother, only teach the truth at all times; Christ will defend you against all reproach, and we have no inclination to abuse anybody."

That pleased the monk; and when Myconius turned to the audience, and called on them to testify that Korbach had acknowledged the gospel truth, Korbach extended his hand to him, as well as to the Elector and the Baron, and then left the room. And thus you see that the gospel, the pure word of God, is truly a pearl for which a man will give what he has, if he only apprehends it in its original beauty and power."

Thus the Lieutenant concluded his narrative, and then continued a promiscuous conversation with those around him.

At this time, Leonard Fichtner turned to his neighbor, and said, "How glad I am that I came in here at this fortunate juncture. I find it good to be here. I feel as

if I were among the true champions of Christianity; in the camp of the children of God."

"That is because the great Field-marshal of the Christian army is here," replied Dietrich, smiling.

"And the proper armor, too," added the other. "We have shield and buckler and helmet, and, above all, the two-edged sword and the standard, with the inscription, 'With this sign thou shalt conquer.'"

Fichtner looked towards each of his neighbors with an approving smile, and then turning wholly towards the younger, he said, "You will not, Magister, deny a stranger the liberty of asking a question. I have heard that you are the intimate friend of Dr. Martin Luther, and an inmate of his house. I have come a hundred miles to see this man of God. Tell me, how can I succeed in gaining a personal interview with him?"

"You have nothing more to do," replied Dietrich, smiling, "than to knock at his study-door, and you will immediately hear, '*Come in!*'"

"At what hour may I call?" asked Fichtner.

"To that I may reply, at any time or at no time; for, as long as I have been his secretary, I have never known him to have any leisure hours. His life is daily devoted to the kingdom of God, from early morning till late at night; and I would not be here now, if the Doctor had not told me that he wished to have a few hours private interview with Melancthon. But I will wait on you tomorrow about an hour before noon, and then announce you to the Doctor."

Fichtner accepted this kind offer with heartfelt joy. When he had expressed his obligation to the Secretary, the elder gentleman remarked: "You speak our language

very correctly, dear Sir, but I still perceive that you were born and reared in another country. I will not ask you, but my eye and ear seldom deceive me; you are an Italian, and you may become my assistant!"

Whilst Fichtner was betraying some doubt as to the import of these last words, Dietrich relieved him of his embarrassment, by saying,

"This is the venerable Master Lucas Kranach, the celebrated painter, and Electoral Chamberlain of our good city of Wittenberg!"

Fichtner's countenance exhibited the most agreeable surprise when he heard these words. "How extremely fortunate I have been to-day!" he cried out. "Your reputation, venerable Sir, has extended beyond the boundaries of your own country, and your name is highly honored by us in Italy; and if you had painted no person but Martin Luther, your reputation would be established on Luther's name and cause. I will not deny that I was born in Milan, and you are one of the men whom I have come to Wittenberg to see. If you regard wood-sculpture as a sister art of painting, I may count myself among your pupils. If you wish to complete my happiness, allow me to visit you in your studio!"

"Come as often as you like," answered Kranach, and extended his hand. "He who is Luther's friend is also dear to me."

In the mean time, the landlord advanced towards the new guest, and informed him that his supper and chamber were ready. Fichtner bade his neighbors good night, and followed the landlord.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND INTERVIEW.

The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation, for behold, it is within you. — LUKE xvii: 20.

THE impatience with which young Fichtner awaited the decision of his fate, drove him to Homberg's house at an earlier hour than would otherwise have been proper. When he knocked at the door, he suddenly heard the confusion of surprise and indistinct voices. He was about going away, when he heard "*come in,*" and with a trembling heart he entered.

On his entrance he saw no one, but soon after he observed Margaret sitting by her spinning-wheel, in the same corner which she had occupied the day before.

"Take a seat, Sir," said she, politely, even before he had uttered a word of salutation; "and excuse my sister, —she will be in presently."

"How do you know it is I?" said Fichtner, quite surprised.

"I recognized you by your step," she replied. "But take a seat! Father has had an uneasy night, I am told, and has probably not yet risen."

"Then it would have been better if I had not come so early," said Fichtner, and made a slight motion towards leaving.

"No, — do stay, Sir!" begged the blind girl. "My sister has requested you to wait a few moments for her!"

"But I feel," said Fichtner, "that I have come too early, and I do not wish to be unwelcome a second time."

"No, certainly not, Sir!" responded Margaret. "My sister has expressly enjoined it upon me not to let you go away."

"You are always talking of your sister!" said the young man. "Am I not here too early for you? or is it so perfectly indifferent to you whether your father gives me employment or not?"

"Sir!" said the girl, in a meek and patient tone, "To a blind person nothing is too early or too late. We divide the day differently from those who see. It is day with us when we wake, and night when we sleep; and we do not know whether it accords with your time or not, unless you tell us."

"I know," replied Fichtner, "you have reproved me for calling you *poor*, and yet I can do nothing else than pity you from the bottom of my heart that you are denied the privilege of sight!"

Margaret laughingly shook her head, and observed, "How you people who see do judge of us! It is true, I do not see your world, of which you tell so many wonderful things, and I do not behold its brilliancy and magnificence, which you say so often dazzle your eyes. I do not even know what you mean, when you say that this or that occasionally blinds your eyes. To you it appears to be something awful, and yet I am so happy in that condition. Do you not think, Sir, that we blind people have a world within us which is perhaps more beautiful than

yours, and that we have a light within us which shines more brilliantly than your sun?"

"O, by no means!" replied Fichtner. "When my eyes look upon a beautiful landscape, illuminated by the golden rays of the sun, I feel as if my eyes were feasting on heavenly food! Miss Margaret," he added, "the sun is a refreshing picture of life!"

"Perhaps for you!" answered she, "but not for the most of others. Why do you have so many unhappy persons among you, for they all see the sun?"

"Then you were never unhappy?" he suddenly inquired.

"O no!" she replied. "It is true, I hear many things which might make me unhappy, but I have never yet observed that the world within me has thereby changed. I always behold the same beautiful picture of perfection, and it is always the Lord of heaven and earth who hovers over it in such transparent glory, that I am always moved to adoration. My soul is often overwhelmed with deep emotion, and I seem to hear the songs of the angels. I enjoy happy communion with God, and yet I tremble in the presence of his awful majesty! Ah! when I so often hear my father or sister or neighbors complain of the evil in the world—of false friends, and blasted hopes—of unrequited good and perverted truth—then, I think to myself, you poor people, could you but see *my* world, wherein the folly and wickedness of men can neither change nor destroy anything—but"—she suddenly stopped—"what foolish things I am speaking to you! You will certainly call them silly dreams, as others do?"

"What say you, Margaret?" cried Fichtner, with emotion; "silly dreams? Yes, dreams I call them, but hea-

venly dreams; pictures of a happy world. Margaret, speak on! It seems to me as if an angel were telling me of the happiness of the blessed in the world above! Now I believe that you have never been unhappy; and yet"—he suddenly interrupted himself—"have you been really exalted above all human suffering? have you no heart of feeling? do you not suffer when others suffer? do you really feel nothing of the pain which harasses our minds? Margaret, tell me, were you never, *never* unhappy? Is there nothing on earth that distresses you?"

Margaret depressed her head deeper than usual, and relapsed into silence. The young man, impelled by an unusual emotion of his heart, advanced nearer to her, and gently lifted up her head; and when he saw her pale cheeks covered with a fleeting blush, and observed silent tears trickling from her sightless eyes, he said, "Margaret, you cannot deceive me! You also have your sorrows; and over that mental picture of heaven which you behold, there is spread a mist which conceals from your inner eye the glory of God. But as truly as I believe in a Saviour, you shall be delivered from these troubles!"

"Sir," replied she, in great excitement, "what right have you to disturb the peace of my mind?" But she immediately recovered herself, and proceeded in a milder and almost suppliant tone—"Say nothing more—you deceive yourself! How can you, a stranger, know what no one has ever told you?"

"Margaret!" continued the young man, "shall I tell you the source of your trouble? *You are the ill-treated and rejected daughter of this family!* That is the wound which makes your heart bleed. But as I am a living man, by God's help, this wound shall be healed."

The blind girl slowly shook her head in manifest trouble, whilst tears flowed copiously down her marble cheeks. "God is merciful!" she then said, as if to herself. "He has deprived me of sight, but He has granted me the privilege of tears. How happy I am that I can yet weep. For many, many years, even this gift was almost denied me."

Fichtner was about to continue the conversation, when he heard a door open and close in an adjoining room. This sound greatly agitated the blind girl. As if alarmed out of a dream, she hurriedly said, "Sir, what did you say a moment ago? believe me, you are mistaken! You told me yesterday that you have no evil designs upon us, and I hold you to that word! Give me your promise that you will, neither by word or action, occasion pain to any one; do you hear, *to any one* in this house!"

"Margaret," replied Fichtner, earnestly, "where a righteous and holy God speaks in his own judgments, there man can add nothing to them, nor take anything away. But I promise you, that what I say or do in this house, shall be said and done only as the servant of my Lord in Heaven. Does that satisfy you?"

"No, no!" rejoined the girl, in a voice of agonizing entreaty, and firmly held the hand of the young man. At this moment the door of the adjoining room opened, and Fichtner had scarcely time to assume a position free from suspicion.

It was Catharine who entered. She had decorated herself in costly style; brilliant rings and bracelets glittered on her fingers and arms; a beautiful green velvet cap with a golden border covered the top of her head and a portion of her deep blond braids of hair; an ornamented

reticule was suspended at her right side by two silver chains, which was designed as a badge of the industrious housewife; in her eyes, as well as in her full, blooming countenance, there played the smile of benevolence, and of the most perfect self-satisfaction.

"Pardon me, Mr. Fichtner," said she, in a pleasant tone, "that I compelled you to wait; in the name of my father, I bid you welcome."

"It is my part to ask pardon of you," replied he. "I now see that I have come at an unseasonable hour, but my impatience is too great. May I hope to find employment in your house?"

"I believe you may hope," answered Catharine. "It is true that father has not distinctly expressed his mind, but I have reason to think that he will be more willing to-day than yesterday."

"And to whom am I indebted for this favorable change in my destiny?" asked Fichtner. "Most certainly to no one but yourself, worthy Miss, and to your kind intercession."

Catharine cast down her eyes as if embarrassed, and yet it was evident from her deportment that she was gratified at what he said. "Is it not a Christian duty," said she, finally, in a half-loud tone, "to render services to our fellow-men?"

"Certainly!" replied Fichtner. "But you do not know me; you are not sure whether you are showing your kindness to one worthy of it, and whether you may not regret your Christian intercession."

"Sir!" said the lady, as if in jest, "you are surely not a heretic?" Scarcely had these words escaped her lips

when her face reddened with shame. "I meant to say," she quickly added, "you are certainly a Christian!"

"Yes, with all my heart!" affirmed the young man. "But, although you have explained your own language, allow me to ask still further, who and what must I be to deserve the name of heretic?"

"Well," replied Catharine, in real perplexity, "I only wished to say, as you, like my father, are a sculptor in wood, you, like him, are also faithful to our holy mother Church. Luther has turned the heads of many persons here."

"And their hearts, too!" said Fichtner, quickly. "But I observe that this is not pleasant to you. Be assured, however, that with all my heart I am a Christian; and if this proof is satisfactory to you, I will tell you that no longer ago than yesterday I attended mass; and now accept my cordial thanks for your kind intercession."

Catharine avoided making any further reply to this part of the subject. "Yesterday," said she, "you did not partake of the refreshment which I hastily prepared for you; to-day I hope you will not refuse. I am only carrying out father's directions. I shall be with you shortly. Margaret, set out the table immediately."

Without waiting for a reply, she suddenly left the room. Margaret rose from her seat without delay, and advancing towards the table, which stood at a window, she took from the drawer a clean cloth and the necessary dishes, and set out three covers as neatly as a person who could see; she performed all as silently and faithfully as a servant obeying the orders of her mistress.

Fichtner regarded the blind girl with a feeling of deep sympathy. Now, for the first time, he observed how poorly

she was clothed. A grey, coarse dress covered her from the shoulders to the ancles, similar to the penitential garb of a nun. This was her whole dress, without the slightest ornament. Her only decoration was her full, black hair that threw back a real silver lustre, and fell on both sides over her shoulders in long, massive ringlets. She then silently glided by Fichtner towards her accustomed corner.

The young man could scarcely restrain himself; as she passed by him he grasped her by the hand, and said, "Margaret, have my words composed your mind?"

"We are in the hands of God!" she replied.

"And does God's sun now shine in your world?" he asked again.

She did not reply, but covered her blind eyes with the other hand, and with an unsteady step she proceeded to her place in the corner.

The door opened, and Catharine entered. She bore several articles of refreshment on a salver, and set it on the table. "Now, Mr. Fichtner," said she, most kindly, "I trust you will not do as you did yesterday, but that you will sit down and partake with us. Father will be here in a moment!"

"Worthy Miss," said Fichtner, "dare I ask one question?"

"And what is that?" she inquired, blushing.

"I observe," he continued, "that the table is set for three persons. When your father comes, will there not be four of us? Have you not a sister?"

"Ah!" replied Catharine, suddenly, "you mean Margaret! the poor girl is blind, and is of little service in the house. She has her place there by the stove, which she does not often leave, and we allow her to follow her own

inclination. But, if you should take offence at it — Margaret, will you take a seat with us?"

"No, Catharine!" replied the blind girl.

"You see, Sir," continued Catharine, "that my sister is so accustomed to her silent corner, that she would much rather stay there. But, I hear father coming!"

Old Homberg came in; his agitated countenance, deeply sunken eyes, pale cheeks, and slow unsteady step, all gave evidence of his having passed a sleepless night. He did not return the salutation of Fichtner with much heartiness, and avoided even looking him full in the face. "Catharine," said he, "has prepared a slight breakfast for you; sit down, and suit yourself to our *national custom*."

He laid an impressive and bitter emphasis on these latter words, but Fichtner pretended not to have observed it. "Do not blame me, venerable Sir, but if you want me to partake of this fare with any sort of relish, first tell me my fate; gratify my most ardent desire, and say, am I to be your pupil or not?"

"Your importunity does not please me," replied Homberg. "Suppose I tell you that I have no work!"

"Certainly you have, dear father!" suddenly spake Catharine; "you surely have work!" and she gently patted the old man's cheeks. "You have the altar to carve, and you must have help for that. No later than yesterday you were complaining that your eyes were getting bad, and that you could scarcely see to do such fine work!"

"Foolish child!" said he, although not in a tone of severity. He then threw a hasty glance on the young man; but, as his countenance brought up in the old man's mind an unpleasant reminiscence which goaded heart and

conscience, he instantly looked to the ground again, and said, "I do not deny that it is with reluctance I give you a place in my shop; and yet I do not say that I will do it. But still, you may stay for a week or two."

"I am much obliged to you even for this short time," said Fichtner; "and although I know that I am indebted for this favor to the intercession of your daughter, yet I will accept it as though you had paid some respect to the recommendation of your old friend Urban in Augsburg!"

"Take a seat! take a seat!" said Homberg, without any reply to Fichtner's remarks. "Excuse me; I have as yet no disposition to eat. Catharine will wait on you. You must begin work to-day; to-morrow, to-morrow"—and he hastened out of the room.

"Your father seems to be sick!" said Fichtner, and seated himself at the table after another invitation from Catharine.

"He is occasionally sad!" said she; "but he will soon be cheerful again. If you do not regard me as presumptuous, I should like to know where your home is. Are your parents still living?"

"My dear father is still living, thank heaven!" replied he; "I am here with his permission. My mother died two years ago."

"And your home?" asked the lady.

"What do you mean by home?" inquired Fichtner. "Has the bird a home which to-day rests on one tree, and to-morrow on another?"

"Holy Mary!" cried out the maiden, alarmed; "you are not surely an outlaw!"

"Would that alarm you?" asked Fichtner, smiling. "Is not the bird happy which can wing its way wherever

it likes? I am not an outlaw; my conscience does not accuse me of heinous offence, though I feel the weight and guilt of sin in my heart!"

"Your language is gloomy indeed, Sir," replied she. "Why do you not get absolution, if your sins oppress you? Holy Mother Church is merciful, and does not impose a severer penance than is necessary."

"And is it all over then?" he asked. "I once saw a smith, who immersed a red-hot bar of iron into cold water; the iron became colder and harder than before. Then thus I thought: an alarmed and agitated conscience is just such a burning brand in us; and so long as it burns, it is indeed painful, but still it does not despair. It yet feels the fear of God; and as fear alone does not suffice, but love must also be mingled with it, which relieves fear, so it would be much better if this burning conscience were not immersed in cold water, by which it becomes harder than before. O that there were an ointment which would soothe the inflammation, and yet preserve the conscience soft and warm! and I believe such an ointment may be found."

"I do not understand you," said Catharine, with a dissatisfied air.

But, at the same time, a gentle voice from the corner uttered these words: "What precious truth that is!"

"Margaret," cried the sister, impatiently, "what does all this mean? You always seem to be asleep, and yet you hear every word. Father's bed is not yet made, and I think you had better go before he gets angry!"

"Is your poor sister able to do such work?" asked Fichtner. "I should suppose it would better suit persons who can see."

"You do not surely mean that I should do it?" said Catharine, with affected astonishment. "Margaret would not allow that—is it not so, Margaret? you do not want me to do that?"

"No, Catharine," mildly replied the blind girl. "I shall go immediately;" and she rose.

The heart of the young man was agitated. "If I were in your place, Miss Catharine," said he, "I would relieve the poor blind sister of such work. It is true, you are finely dressed, and such dress is not exactly suitable for such service; yet——"

"I see plainly," Catharine exclaimed, interrupting him violently, "that blind Margaret has excited your sympathy; she understands that art very well, helpless and silly as she usually pretends to be."

"Miss Catharine," said Fichtner, sternly, but with dignity, "would you censure that sympathetic feeling which a merciful God awakens in the hearts of the seeing in behalf of the blind? Catharine, you need the ointment of which I spoke. You have steeped your heart and conscience in cold water, and both have become hard. Beware in time of him who can cause a flame to burn which the coldest water cannot extinguish."

And thus he suddenly departed, leaving the sisters both alarmed, though influenced by different causes.

CHAPTER IV.

LUTHER AT HOME.

Give honor to the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered.

1 PET. iii. 7.

AT the appointed hour, Fichtner entered the halls of the Augustinian monastery, in which Luther had his residence. In one of the passages he met Veit Dietrich, who was on the eve of going out.

"Oh, here you are," he cried out, and extended to him the hand of welcome. "I have mentioned your coming to the Doctor, and he is expecting you. He is just now in his family room, and you can enter without any hesitation."

Fichtner's heart was agitated. He had not yet seen the man whose name was mentioned throughout all Europe, and even in the countries of Asia; by some with fear and trembling and execrations, and by others with joyful hope and fervent blessings. He felt as if he were about to appear before a judge who could spy into the recesses of his heart, and it required some courage to knock at the door pointed out by the Secretary. He heard within a voice speaking in a kind and tender tone, and he thought that his knocking was not heard, when some one cried out, "Come in!"

When Fichtner entered, he saw a man in a black, broad-lappelled dressing-gown, and a child riding on his knee, heartily laughing at the irregular leaps of the mimic horse.

“Will you ride with us, sir!” said Luther, laughing, to the stranger, without waiting for a salutation. “My little Hans is riding straight to Rome to give his father’s salutation to the Pope. When he sees the innocent child, I should think he must laugh from his inmost soul. None but a father and mother know the great blessing of God such a child is; vulgar people and obstinate heads are not worthy of it. Yes, Hans,” he continued, whilst he patted the chubby cheeks of the child, “you are our Lord’s little fool; you live under grace, and not under the law; you have no fear; you are secure and have no anxiety about anything; whatever you do is right. Do you know,” said he, turning to Fichtner, “the word of the Divine children’s Patron, “Unless ye become like little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

“Yes, reverend Doctor!” replied the young man, and he trembled with profound veneration and almost holy awe before the man who had shaken the half of Christendom, and had alarmed popes and emperors, and yet, who was here the humble servant of his infant child; “Yes, I know the passage, and would like to become like a little child.”

“I perceive you also so understand it,” continued Luther: “that such a simple child should be preferred to a wise man. I only comprehended this passage rightly since I have observed the simplicity and innocence of children in my own flesh and blood. The faith and conduct of children are most perfect of all, for they have nothing but the

word: to that they adhere, giving God the glory only, and trust simply in his promises. We old fools, on the other hand, are agitated by conflicting passions; we dispute long about the word which children receive with pure faith, without disputation, and simply believe. But, see, sir"—interrupting himself—"little Hans is now in Rome, and wishes to dismount."

Whilst he was letting the child from his knee gently to the floor, a side door opened, and a young woman, in plain domestic dress, entered. The child extended his arms, and tripped with awkward step towards the mother.

"Here is the ungrateful little fellow, Katy!" said Luther, smiling, to his wife. "For half an hour I have been playing horse for him, and now he trundles away without a word of thanks. It is certainly true, that when a father and mother have a contest about a child, the father comes off second-best. It is my opinion that it was for this reason that God commanded the *father* Abraham, to sacrifice his only and well-beloved son; Sarah, the mother, would not have done it!"

"And would you have done it, dear sir?" asked Catharine, whilst she tenderly caressed the child.

"Ah! ah! dear Katy!" cried Luther. "That is a very sharp thorn with which you pierce my heart. But still I think I would have disputed with the Lord, if He had proposed such a thing to me."

"I cannot comprehend," continued she, "how God could desire such a horrible thing of us as to slay our own children."

Luther looked on his wife with an earnest, yet tender air, and said, "Dear Katy, can you then believe that God gave His only-begotten Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus

Christ, to die for us, when He had nothing more dear in Heaven or earth to give? and yet He permitted Him to suffer the ignominious death of the cross? If we are to judge of these extraordinary acts of God by the light of human reason, then we must conclude that God acted more paternally and kindly towards Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod and others, from whom He demanded no such sacrifice, than towards His only-begotten Son."

"You are right, dear sir!" replied the wife. "But you have said yourself the mother would not have done it; and it must have been hard enough for the father."

"Yes, yes," continued he, "the Patriarch must have ascended Mount Moriah with a heavy heart, and I dare say he did not utter a word to Sarah about the sacrifice he was commanded to make. But he still did it, or rather was sincerely willing to do it."

"What do you suppose could have consoled him in such a terrible undertaking?" asked the mother. "My heart trembles when I only think of it."

"It could have been nothing else than this," replied Luther; "Abraham must have believed in a resurrection of the dead, when he was about to sacrifice his son Isaac, for he had the promise that the Saviour should descend from him, and this promise could, of course, not be fulfilled, if Isaac should not, in some way or other, be restored to life again. The epistle to the Hebrews testifies the same thing. But I will not oppose you, dear Katy, and willingly grant that our dear Heavenly Father would have to assail me sharply before I would consent to sacrifice our little son with my own hand."

An interesting conversation on the relative duties of husband and wife ensued between these two persons. Lu-

ther spoke tenderly of the blessings of domestic felicity, and of married life generally, and his wife responded in a manner becoming the virtuous, Christian woman.

“But,” said Luther, turning towards his guest, “whilst as husband and father I have been speaking in praise of matrimony, I, as a man and Christian, have not been treating you very politely. I have not yet bid you welcome, just as though you were not present. You are, doubtless, the young man from Milan, of whom my Secretary has spoken so favorably to me, informing me, among other things, that you were seated beside him and my relative Cranach, listening so attentively and profitably to the affair of the Franciscan Korbach, and my faithful Myconius.”

Fichtner blushed when he heard these words respecting himself. “Venerable Doctor,” said he, “if your Secretary has spoken anything in praise of me, he has done wrong.”

“That is very well said,” replied Luther; “and although I do not like to see young people too backward and bashful, but admire some degree of self-confidence in them. yet everything has its limits, and humility very well becomes a young man.”

In the mean time, Catharine, Luther’s wife, had risen to leave the room, and to take little Hans with her. But the child was unwilling to go, and began to cry, as the mother was about tenderly compelling him to go. And as he would not be composed, but cried still more violently, Luther said, “Wait, Hans, we will soon drive away the evil spirit.”

He reached towards his lute, which stood in one corner of the room, touched several strings, and the child was instantly silent.

"Do you see," said he to Fichtner, "what a glorious gift of God music is? Just as it silences the child, thus it drives out the devil, and makes people happy. Are you also a devotee of Madam Music?"

"Yes, venerable Sir," replied Fichtner, with a countenance lighted up with joy.

"And do you also play the lute?" inquired Luther. And as the young man also gave an affirmative answer to this question, "Then," continued Luther, "you have come exactly at the right time. Hans shall soon be quieted. Have you heard of the two Christian martyrs at Brussels? I have written an account of the whole transaction in verse, and have set it to music; and as my dear Katy has not heard it yet, you shall aid me in playing it."

Luther stepped into an adjoining room, and soon returned with a large book. He opened it, and handing the lute to the young man, said, "Now, Sir, play this tune as David played it. You shall be excused from singing; that is *my* part. And you, dear wife, shall listen attentively with the child, and sing with us in your heart."

Fichtner took the lute, and, as he was a master of the instrument, he played the short prelude with confidence and expression. Luther sang with his full, sonorous voice, three stanzas of the poem, when Fichtner said, "Venerable Sir! if you will do me the honor to allow me, I will continue the singing myself."

"Play and sing, then," cried out Luther, playfully. "I observe already that I have found a master in you."

And Fichtner sang on, in a beautiful tenor voice, three more stanzas. Thus far, Luther listened attentively; but he suddenly seized his flute, and said, "I cannot be silent

any longer when I hear such splendid music. Play on and sing, master of Milan, that the little angels in heaven may be refreshed. I have again my part to perform."

He now played his flute with the perfection of a master, whilst the young man sang. The last stanza alluded to the infamous attempts of the papists to show that these young martyrs had abandoned their faith in their last moments; and when it was finished, Luther cried out with a loud voice, "That is the devil speaking out of these papists. No one who has ever ascended the scaffold for Christ's sake, has come down from it denying Christ. Let them carry on their game with deception and lies, we still know that the devil is the father of lies." And now he laid his flute aside, and sang in company with Fichtner in an ardent tone of triumph, the last stanza, which ended with the word "Amen!"

"Amen, and again Amen!" repeated Luther, whilst his eyes glistened with fire, like one full of the Holy Ghost. "Our enemies must acknowledge our doctrine even against their will; yea, the truth is so apparent that no sensible man can deny it. But their lies, thank heaven! are now revealed and brought to light, so that every one who is not stock-blind may see it."

But Fichtner, who was still taken up with the story of the poem, now asked, "And is all this true that is here written, Doctor?"

"Yes, alas! all is true!" replied Luther. "Four years ago, on the first of July, A. D. 1523, all this happened at Brussels. Two brothers of my order, that is, Augustinian monks, and soon after a third, were burnt at the stake for their confession of Christ. But the time has now arrived of which Solomon speaks. The flowers appear on

the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come ; and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. But," continued he, turning to Fichtner, "you are a finished musician."

"I cherish it as a gift of God !" said Fichtner.

"That is right," responded Luther. "The devil does not stay long where music is performed. Music is the best balsam for a distressed heart ; it refreshes and quickens the soul. Music is a governess, which renders people milder, meeker, more modest and discreet. Yes, my master of Milan, music is a beautiful, glorious gift of God ; and, next to theology, I give to it the highest place and the highest honor. I am myself but a poor musician, but I would not part with my knowledge of it for a great deal."

In the mean time, little Hans had left the room without any opposition or noise. Fichtner seemed to be waiting for this opportunity ; for he turned to Luther, and said, "Venerable Doctor ! you have received me, a stranger, as a child of your own house. Oh ! you do not know how greatly you honor me by this act of kindness. But there is yet a heavy burden lying on my heart and conscience which your word alone can remove. Grant me an interview of a short hour, that I may pour out my heart to you !"

"If I can advise and help you, I will cheerfully do so," replied Luther, and invited his guest to follow him into his study.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRUTH DEVELOPED.

The days of visitation — the days of recompense are come.

HOSEA ix. 7.

“PERMIT me, Doctor,” began the young man, when he had seated himself in the study with Luther, — “Permit me first to tell you something about my dear parents. Your secretary was right in saying that I am from Milan. I have been born and reared in that beautiful city.”

“I know the city of your birth very well,” said Luther, interrupting him. “When I was there, seventeen years ago, the priests insisted on my reading mass. They thought the Germans performed mass according to the rules of Gregory, whilst the Milanese followed the directions of Ambrose! — The poor people! They quarrel about Gregory and Ambrose, and in the mean time they pass by Jesus Christ! — But proceed.”

“My father’s name,” continued Fichtner, “is Andreas Pinetta; he is yet living, and is a skilful goldsmith, whom God has richly blessed in temporal things. My dear sainted mother died two years ago, and I promised her on her deathbed, that I would come here to Wittenberg, for the special purpose of seeing and hearing you, venerable Doctor! and she faithfully related to me what I here report to you.”

"That is, indeed, encouraging news from Italy," said Luther. "God bless your sainted mother! I think there are few like her in that land of Epicureans."

"At the time," continued Fichtner, "that my dear mother was betrothed to my father, a German workman came to Milan: he was a carver in wood, and his master's workshop was opposite the house in which my mother's parents lived. The German was a man of fine appearance, and his name was Andrew Homberg."

"What!" exclaimed Luther—"is it that Homberg, the wood-carver, who lives here?"

"Yes, Doctor," replied Fichtner.

"Demetrius the Second, as my dear Melanchthon calls him," continued Luther. "Do you know that Homberg is my most unrelenting enemy in Wittenberg? The poor man clings to popery as the goldsmith Demetrius of Ephesus adhered to heathenism. Demetrius would probably have become a Christian, if the manufacture of the silver temples of Diana had not brought him in so much money; and in like manner old Homberg would be inclined to the gospel, if he would not thereby lose his business of carving images of the Holy Virgin for the Papists. The poor fool! His reputation and boast consist in his ability to carve out of a block of wood a beautiful Virgin Mary, before which the deluded bow down and worship. But, in this business, we have touched his heart and his purse."

"Homberg," now resumed Fichtner, "contrived to secure an introduction into the house of my sainted mother, and gradually revealed his design of winning her affections for himself, and of withdrawing them from her betrothed; but when she and her parents discovered this, they forbade him further access to the family."

"Very proper," said Luther. "But do you know how your mother was inclined towards him?"

"She told me," he responded, "that she entertained some respect for him at first, as a stranger and as a well-behaved man; but that she was alarmed when she discovered his purpose, for she was devoted to my father with all her heart. But now the envy and hatred of Homberg were excited against my father; and, to be brief, one night, when my father was returning from a visit to my mother, he was attacked by Homberg, and stabbed with a poignard."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Luther, in alarm. "Thus old Homberg bears on his forehead the mark of Cain."

"My poor father," continued Fichtner, "was taken up for dead, and carried away; and it was as if by a miracle that he recovered. The wound was deep and dangerous, and it was only on the third day that the surgeon announced any hope of restoration."

"Murder is murder," said Luther. "Homberg is a murderer, whether your father lived or died. And does the unhappy man know this?"

"No," replied the young man. "He must have left Milan the same night, for no person saw him afterwards; and although he was pursued for many years, yet he never could be found. At first, my dear parents were extremely indignant at the young German, but gradually they came to regard him with sympathy. It now happened that your theses of world-wide celebrity against the errors of Rome also found their way to Milan, and were received by many persons with joy. Among these were my dear parents, but especially my good mother, who, through the influence of your words, entirely changed her religious views. She conceived such an ardent desire after the true

gospel, that she attempted to persuade my father to emigrate to Germany, because, on account of the unrelenting opposition of the Catholics against you and your doctrine, there was no hope of establishing evangelical worship in Milan, or anywhere else in Italy."

"Yes," said Luther, "it is very evident that the papists would suffer the church to be destroyed, if they could only exterminate us Lutheran boys, as they call us. And particularly do the Italian papists despise and condemn other nations, when they themselves are an abomination before God, because of their pride and wickedness. Their fasting is more luxurious than our most costly meals. It has always been my advice to young men, when they have well learned the Catechism and are thoroughly grounded in the Scriptures, to go to Italy, that they may see the knavery and cunning of these priests, so that they might learn to guard against them."

"Oh, venerable sir, you are right!" exclaimed Fichtner.

"And all the divine judgments with which they are visited have no good effect on them," continued Luther, in an excited tone. "A few months ago, the Lord, in his displeasure, brought down his rod of chastisement upon the Sodomitic city of Rome, by permitting the Duke of Brabant, with a small army, to beat down its walls and capture it, so that the pope himself was compelled to fly, and barely escaped into the fortress of St. Angelo. A terrible slaughter ensued. But of what benefit was this righteous judgment of heaven? This only, that a few weeks ago the pope issued a bull against the Lutheran heretics, and declared in it, that these Lutheran heretics had brought this misfortune on Rome, and that all Lutherans were robbers, rebels, and murderers. I would rather

lose a hundred thousand guilders, than not to have been at Rome, although I do not yet fully understand all their shameful abominations. When I had a first view of the city, I fell to the earth, lifted up my hands, and exclaimed, Hail, holy Rome! Yes, truly holy, from the holy martyrs and their blood, which was there shed. But this sanctity is destroyed, since Rome has the pope."

"May I be allowed to continue my narrative, venerable Doctor?" asked Fichtner.

"Certainly; proceed!" replied Luther. "This man, Homberg, has awakened an interest in me, and the ways of the Lord are wonderful by which he redeems a poor soul. But excuse my indignation; whenever I think of Rome, I feel as if a greedy hand were grasping my heart and reins. It is the impenitence of Rome that has brought all misfortune on the world."

"As I gradually grew up," continued Fichtner, "the more distinctly did my mother open her mind to me. Although she was innocent of the crime, yet her conscience was not easy; she reproached herself with treating the German too unkindly, and thus, in some degree, being accessory to the sin, when she might perhaps have convinced him of his folly by more tender language."

"By no means, young man!" said Luther. "No man will be dissuaded from an unchaste love by words, unless he repents in general of his sins before, and examines his heart,"—and here Luther continued his discourse on the nature of repentance and faith, to which the young man listened with profound attention.

"My sainted mother," resumed Fichtner, "had no distinct knowledge of these things; she tormented herself grievously about it, and stoutly maintained that she was

called to redeem the poor soul of Homberg. Some time after, it so happened, that another German carver named Urban came to Milan, and became acquainted with my father. He gave us some information about Homberg, and told us that he was yet living, and carrying on his business in Wittenberg. When my mother heard that, she had no rest until I also became a carver in wood and learned the German language, that I might travel to Germany, enter Homberg's house, tell him how all things have turned out, convey to him the forgiveness of my parents, and redeem his soul. All that was very agreeable to me, especially as thereby I might satisfy my thirst for evangelical knowledge, and live near you. My mother lived and died under the full conviction that her participation in Homberg's guilt could only be removed by his reconciliation with God and man."

"That is a laudable, Christian design!" said Luther, "although your mother burdened her conscience unnecessarily. We are justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law; and if my salvation depended on the conversion of all who hate me for Christ's sake, and who have done me wrong, I never would be saved myself, and the pope would have power to destroy me with himself. Therefore, observe, young man, Satan torments the conscience with the law particularly, and represents Jesus as a severe Judge, and says, 'God is the enemy of sinners, for he is just. You are a sinner, therefore God is your enemy.' Thus the conscience is smitten and enslaved."

"But, venerable Doctor," exclaimed Fichtner, with deep anxiety, "is not all this right? and can any one silence the voice of conscience?"

"Christ can do it," replied Luther, quickly. God is

not the enemy of all sinners, but only of ungodly and impenitent sinners, and persecutors of his word. For it was poor, weak sinners, who feel and confess their sins, that Christ came to save. For just as sin is of a twofold character, so also is righteousness. The law, when it does its best, and is used for the best purpose, can yet do nothing more than to help us to know our sins, and alarm us in view of death. But, where a man is alarmed and feels guilt, death, the wrath and judgment of God, there is certainly no righteousness, nothing that is heavenly and divine, but merely such an emotion as is common among men. Hence, it is plain, that the law can accomplish nothing that is life-giving, saving, heavenly or divine, but it only serves to convince us of the evil that is in the world, both external and spiritual."

"Would not the law in that case be unnecessary?" asked Fichtner.

"O no, young man," replied Luther. "The law is given to drive the alarmed conscience to desire the divine promise, and to seek Christ. The law is also a light which makes manifest, not indeed the grace of God, nor that righteousness by which a man attains to everlasting life and happiness, but the law makes known our sin, infirmities, death, and the wrath and judgment of God. That is the peculiar work of the law, and it cannot do more. But the *gospel* is quite another light, for it relieves alarmed hearts, quickens, comforts, and aids them. For the *gospel* shows how God can be merciful to the lost sinner for Christ's sake, if he believes that he is redeemed by his death, and that through his conquest over death, the blessings, grace, forgiveness of sin, righteousness, and eternal life, are bestowed on him. When we thus distin-

guish between the law and gospel, we ascribe to each its appropriate work and office."

"Ah!" exclaimed the young man, highly excited; "why was my poor mother denied this consolation in her dying hour? When we tried to console her according to our weakness and ignorance, by telling her how he may be saved who keeps the commandments of God, she said that does not afford me any comfort—that cannot comfort me; that burns but does not relieve. Speak to me about Christ, that will soothe my troubled soul! Yes, we, who stood around her dying couch, felt that the true ground of comfort was wanting, but we could not give what we had not ourselves. God be merciful to my good mother!"

"Amen, amen!" added Luther, and pressed the hand of the young man with heart-felt sympathy.

After a pause, Fichtner continued, "I have come here for the purpose of fulfilling the vow of my mother, and what she feared is too true. Homberg's family is wretchedly unhappy. Every thing he says shows a bad conscience, and the absence of all true penitence and reformation. Although I translated my Italian name into German, yet he soon discovered what I designed to conceal from him, and for the work he gave me to do, I am indebted to his daughter, Catharine, who has shown me much kindness. Homberg has another daughter, named Margaret, a poor blind girl, who, in her father's house, is treated as a despised servant by her father and sister. This, of itself, is proof to me of his hardened conscience and unrenewed heart; and I now only feel what a difficult work I have undertaken, to help others, when I am not yet certain of my own salvation. And this is now my most earnest prayer to you, venerable sir, that you would help me, for my mother's sake, to save a poor soul."

“I, a poor, weak man, can do that just as little as you,” rejoined Luther. “That is Christ’s own work through his Holy Spirit. Your mother said well, ‘Speak to me about Christ.’ Even the *name* of Jesus, of itself, has a powerful influence, which the unbelieving may, indeed, blaspheme, and which believers themselves may not wholly comprehend, but no one can deny it. It is a profound mystery, that whosoever calls on the name of the Lord Jesus shall be saved; but it is even so; and the name of Jesus is above every other name; it is, as it were, the sound of the trumpet which awakens the soul and spirit of man, either to life or condemnation. He who mentions the name of Christ is not yet insensible to religious impression, and will either fall or stand by that name. In the light of my own reason, I possess and know nothing of Jesus Christ because I have never personally seen nor heard him; I possess and know only His name. But, thank God, I have learned so much of Him from the Scriptures, that I am satisfied with that, and, hence, I do not desire to see or hear Him personally in this sinful life.”

“What a wonderful mystery you have developed to my mind, reverend sir!” said the young man. “It appears to me as if you had conducted me to the summit of a high mountain and showed me the glory of God; or, as if you had led me into a flowery meadow and said, ‘Behold, it is good to be only here!’”

“Then build your tabernacle there,” said Luther with a friendly smile. “Yes,” continued he, “in my greatest weakness, in the midst of alarm, in the deepest consciousness of personal demerit, in the fear of death, in persecution, in strong temptation, I have often experienced the

Divine influence of the name of Jesus. When I stood alone, forsaken of all men, then it inspired confidence, rescued me from despair, quickened my sinking spirit and comforted me in the profoundest grief. And thus, with God's help, cling to that blessed name, and live and die by it!"

"You speak," said Fichtner, in a melancholy tone, "like one who is in the midst of the kingdom of God. From what source shall I derive consolation whilst my faith is yet so weak? Have I also a share in Christ and His kingdom? Has my deceased mother a portion in the Lord, and His salvation?"

"Certainly, young man!" rejoined Luther: "the weak in faith also belong to the kingdom of Christ; otherwise the Lord would not have said to Peter, *strengthen thy brethren*. Besides, St. Paul expressly commands, 'The weak in faith receive ye;' and at another place, 'Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak.' If the weak in faith did not belong to Christ, what would have become of the Apostles themselves, for the Lord rebuked their unbelief even after His resurrection."

"That," said Fichtner, "is very consoling language, both for my own and for my deceased mother's sake! But in reference to the unfortunate Homberg, and my attempts to do him good, allow me, Doctor, to come to you for instruction and advice whenever I feel my own weakness."

"Come as often as you please!" replied Luther. "And if it should so happen that he himself desire to see me, let me know and I will go."

With this, he extended his hand to the young man, and said, "Go, young man, and come again whenever you like."

Call here on some evening, when you will meet some excellent people, and faithful champions of the Lord."

Fichtner left the study of the great man filled with profound veneration for his character and words, every one of which seemed to reveal such a far-seeing insight into heavenly things, which is only possible to the thoroughly enlightened Christian mind. As Fichtner passed by the castle church and was proceeding towards the street in which Homberg lived, he saw, advancing towards him, a young woman led by a man. The man he soon recognized as Veit Dietrich, and was astounded, on a nearer approach, to see blind Margaret standing before him.

"Is it possible that I find you here?" said he, addressing her.

"Yes; sir," she replied, in broken accents, whilst tears started from her eyes. "*I am the rejected daughter of the family.*"

"For heaven's sake, what has happened?" asked he. "Will your unhappy father fill up the measure of his iniquity to the very brim? Lord! stand by me. It is time that judgment begin!"

But Margaret laid her hand over her eyes and said, "Mr. Fichtner, for God's sake, I pray you, think of the promise you made me. I yield to my destiny; and I am in the hands of God. When I left my father's house, God sent Mr. Dietrich to my help: I knew then, that I was to find refuge under the Doctor's roof! He will tell me what to do."

"Then go, in God's name," said Fichtner. "But, Margaret, what I am destined to do, that I will do."

And before she could reply, he hastened towards Homberg's house.

CHAPTER VI.

A TROUBLED CONSCIENCE.

I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; yet, he passed away, and lo, he was not! yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. — Ps. xxxvii. 35, 36.

IN order to a proper understanding of our story, it is necessary to take a short step backward.

Catharine Homberg found herself alone in the room with her sister Margaret, and although the day had considerably advanced, Catharine was still attired in her simple domestic dress—usually, at that hour, she had made her toilet, and had adorned herself in a gaudy and extravagant style. Her whole deportment betrayed an uneasy mind; dark and dismal looks shadowed her ordinarily pleasant countenance, and everything she did betokened an agitated and fretted spirit. She did not speak a word, and acted as though her sister were not present. Margaret, on the other hand, sat in the dark corner at her spinning-wheel, and drew the finest threads from the flax. Although her countenance revealed the unruffled calmness of her heart, yet occasionally it assumed an expression of fear and painful anxiety. She directed her darkened eyes towards her sister, as though she was expecting from her some kind word of sympathy or consolation. But as Catharine paid no attention to her whatever, and bustled

about the room in a disorderly and noisy manner, Margaret could no longer endure it.

"Dear sister," she began, in a tone of deep tenderness, "have you no kind word for me to-day? Shall I not plait your hair?"

"Deceitful thing!" exclaimed Catharine contemptuously, and turned her back upon her sister.

"May God forgive you for using such language," calmly replied Margaret.

"You had better take care about having your own sins forgiven," was her disdainful response. "It suits you very well, that the Lutheran heretics have abolished confession, for now you need not do penance any more."

"Sister!" exclaimed Margaret, with choked utterance, "it is not a good spirit that dictates such thoughts to you. I am aware that in no respect can I compare myself with you; but this I may say, that you cannot repent more sincerely than I. If I have done you an injury, do tell me what it is, for I call heaven to witness, that I do not know, and I shall fall on my knees before you, and beg forgiveness."

"And then," added Catharine, quickly and sneeringly, "you will let the strange young man come into the house, that he may see your humility, and commend you for it. Silence, you false thing! If I did not know you were blind, I would say that it was all pretence. But the saints have punished you, and yet you are not the better for it."

"The saints cannot punish me," replied Margaret, with composure; "and if you consider my blindness a punishment, I will cheerfully bear my portion of the blame; but it is not sisterly for you to mock my misfortune."

"Misfortune!" repeated Catharine, and her face was almost distorted with an expression of scorn and rage. "Oh, just look at it, Miss Margaret! hitherto, to every one who sympathised with you on account of your blindness, you said you were *not* unhappy; and you acted as if it were a real benefit and favor to be blind; and you have often spoken to me and father about it in such exalted strains, as if indeed it were better to be blind than to see. Yes, it would not have required much to make us envy you. And now, all of a sudden, it is a misfortune! Yes, yes, I know *whom* you would like to see; and it is, no doubt, a great misfortune that even *he* can have no fancy for a blind girl."

"May God have mercy on you and me!" said the blind girl, while silent tears coursed down her pale cheeks, now flashing for a moment with crimson red. "But it is dreadful, it is unchristian, to judge and condemn without a hearing or defence. If I have done you wrong, why do you not tell me? Can you take pleasure in knowing your sister to be guilty of a sin which she cannot repent of, because she is not aware of it?"

"You — poor, innocent Margaret!" replied her sister, in a tone of derision; and then, overcome with the emotion that filled her heart, she continued her reproaches. "Shall I be calm, when I know that he severely censures me, and makes a saint of you? Do you expect me to fall down before you as before the queen of heaven, as he does?"

"Catharine," exclaimed Margaret, agitated, "you speak dreadful things. Who is it that censures you, and makes a saint of me?"

"Deceitful girl!" was the indignant exclamation of

Catharine, while she drew quite near to her sister. "You ask, and yet your whole face glows with the blush of your shame; even your blind eyes betray you, and show that you lie."

Margaret covered both her eyes with her hand, fell down on her knees, wept aloud, and said, "Sister, if your heart is not altogether closed to mercy, oh! pity me! impose on me the severest penance, and I will cheerfully endure it; any reparation in my power will I make! I know that in your eyes I am a poor, despised girl; I cannot hope to possess that of which you have an abundance; I am unworthy of your esteem; punish me as you will, and I will bear it; but oh! do not use such language to me again!"

Catharine appeared to have been moved with some degree of tenderness towards her humble sister. Undetermined what to say or do, she was surprised by the sudden entrance of her father, whose dark, forbidding looks were far from promoting composure in the agitated bosom of Catharine.

"What's all this?" he violently exclaimed. "What are you on your knees for, Margaret?"

"I am expiating my sins," answered the daughter, mildly.

"Rise up!" he cried, in a commanding tone. "This state of things shall not continue any longer. You must leave this house! Shall I suffer myself to be any longer annoyed and tortured on your account?"

Margaret, chained, as it were, to the floor by his terrible words, extended her hands towards him, and said, "Dear father, if you turn me out of your house, where shall I, a poor, blind girl, go? Must I not perish on the street?"

“Rise up, I tell you!” angrily repeated Homberg; and, as Margaret had obeyed his command, he continued, in a calmer spirit, “And that, too, is a part of the curse that rests on you, that they will not receive you into a convent. You must go to your aunt in Magdeburg.”

Margaret heard the sentence of banishment from her father’s house in silence; even her tears were all of a sudden sealed up, and a snow-white pallor again covered her cheeks.

“This stranger from Italy must also leave the house!” continued Homberg; “and that this very day. He is the evil spirit that haunts me.”

Whilst Catharine had calmly, and with evident acquiescence, heard the sentence pronounced against her sister, this last expression of her father created a painful excitement in her mind. “The stranger also?” she anxiously asked. “And why so, dear father?”

“Child!” replied he, “you do not know what you ask. For twenty years I have kept it concealed, but it now robs me of all peace. Do you not think that this stranger, who wishes to force me to employ him, is a liar and a deceiver? He calls himself Leonard Fichtner, but do you not know that his real name is Leonardo Pinetta, and that he is an Italian, born in Milan?”

“No,” replied Catharine, amazed; “how should I know that? has he told you so himself, dear father?”

“Not in words, but in his eyes!” rejoined Homberg. “Just look at him, and see how plainly the marks of duplicity and villany are written on his face. He has come here for the purpose of destroying me. Observe him, and hear his language; his very looks are like the talons of a vulture, and his words like the thrusts of a

dagger. Has he not the countenance of his foolish, deceitful mother, and the full name of his accursed father?"

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed Catharine, in great alarm. "What are you saying, dear father? You are more excited than I have ever seen you? May you not be deceiving yourself? This stranger appears to be a well-behaved and genteel young man, even though he seems to feel some sympathy for blind Margaret, and has expressed himself incautiously. Indeed you deceive yourself, dear father."

But Homberg smiled derisively, and said, "You foolish child, should I regard the serpent which is creeping towards me through the grass to destroy me, as an innocent dove? My memory is often weak, but the picture which twenty-five years ago so deeply impressed duplicity and villany on my mind will never be effaced; and the older I get, the more vivid it becomes. But," he added, in strong excitement, "you shall see for yourself."

He then hastened to a bureau against the wall, of which he alone had the key, unlocked it with trembling hands, and took out a casket which was covered with dust and mould from the damp wall. He unlocked it slowly, and grasped at a likeness, and when his eye fell upon it, he trembled in all his limbs. With great violence he threw it on the ground, and exclaimed, "Begone! accursed face! the dead rise up and testify!"

Then the unhappy man, quite exhausted, threw himself into an arm-chair, and covered his eyes with both his hands.

Margaret maintained her composure amid all this excitement, and it seemed to her that all this was the solution of a dark mystery, and the revelation of deeds long

concealed. Her mind was sad, and her blind eyes were directed towards her father in silent expectation of hearing more of her own future destiny.

Catharine, on the other hand, though alarmed by the strange conduct and language of her father, overcame her terror by her curiosity. She lifted up the likeness, the metal frame of which was shattered by the violence of the fall, and contemplating it with a steady gaze, she exclaimed, "Holy Virgin! that is indeed the young Italian!"

"Do you see it now?" asked the father, and smiled like one insane. "The dead rise up and testify. But their witness is not true; they are perjured, and betray the innocent!"

"For the sake of all the saints, Father," said Catharine, "I pray you, tell me, what does all this mean? Whose likeness is this?"

Homberg relapsed into deep silence. Catharine did not venture to repeat the question, though she was aware that she could control her father with a single word or a kiss. She fixed a steadfast gaze on the picture, and her bosom was agitated with violent emotions. Margaret alone was composed; she stood like a marble statue, and silently and submissively waited for the revelation of the Lord.

Finally, Homberg interrupted the silence; the expression of delirium vanished, and the old gloomy features of disdainful self-righteousness settled on his countenance.

"You are right, Catharine," said he, "and I must now tell you what I have long concealed from you. It is possible that you may give testimony which will establish your father's innocence. Now, hear me! You know that I worked two years in Milan, but you do not know what happened there. It so turned out that I became enamoured

of the daughter of a wealthy citizen ; her name was Mary ; she was beautiful and lovely, as that picture shows you ; for that is her likeness, the false, treacherous woman ! I well enough knew that the son of wealthy and respectable parents,—and his accursed name was Leonardo Pinetta,—sought the hand of the daughter ; and people said that they were betrothed. But it was false. Mary's heart belonged to me ; that I observed in her looks, and heard it in the tones of her voice when she spoke. Pinetta saw that I was in his way ; and one evening, as I was unsuspectingly and unarmed, turning the corner of the Piazza Fortuna, and was proceeding in the direction of the Ospital Maggiore, Pinetta rushed upon me from a dark corner, clutched me by the throat, and aimed a deadly blow at my heart with a dagger. I was, of course, compelled to defend my life. I snatched the weapon from his hand, and aimed a blow at his own breast, and I believe he became a victim to his own murderous intentions, for he fell violently to the ground, and uttered a loud cry."

"Holy Mary !" exclaimed Catharine, in terror ; "and was poor Pinetta really dead ?"

"Poor Pinetta ?" asked Homberg, with renewed rage. "What do you mean by that, Catharine ? Have you any sympathy with a deceiver and an assassin ? or do you think I should have bared my bosom, and held still for the murderer ? Have I not also a right to my life and happiness as well as every other man ?"

"Certainly, dear father," answered Catharine, with great anxiety. "I only wanted to know whether Pinetta was really dead ?"

"I do not know !" continued he, in a discontented tone. "I left the murderer lie, and on the same night I left the

city, and returned to Germany. But yet I must believe that the villain received his merited reward; for I was yet in Tyrol, where I was confined to bed several weeks by a fever, and I there heard another traveller tell the people that a short time before a citizen of Milan had been stabbed by a German, and that the police were on the track of the murderer. The wretches! They did not know that the curse had descended on the head of the guilty one."

"And this young man, Leonard Fichtner—who can he be?" asked Catharine.

"Do not mention his accursed name!" interposed Homberg. "His face and his name are like apparitions of the devil! He is the curse of my life, which since that day rests on my head, and which now has assumed human form. I believe that the dead rise, because for themselves they have no rest in the grave."

"My dear father!" said Catharine, with sympathy, "you are tormenting yourself with imaginary guilt. How often have you told me, that in my birth you recognized your reconciliation with God! and if you even had been in the least degree guilty, have you not richly atoned for it to our Holy Mother Church?"

"That is true, child!" said he, in the tone of a satisfied conscience. "I have done more, and atoned more, than I was bound to do. But the wicked one also has his right and power. I have borne the curse of the dying murderer for years, until it reached its end in the birth of the blind girl. When the saints laid you in my arms, and I beheld your beautiful form, your laughing eye, then I knew that my guilt was expiated. Do you see now, Catharine, why I love you so? You are to me the visible evidence of the reconciled God in heaven!"

"My dear father!" cried Catharine, and fell upon his neck and kissed him.

Margaret stood in the corner, silent and motionless as a statue.

"But now, I entreat you, dear father," continued Catharine, in a flattering tone, "do not forget it again, that the saints have given me to you as the comfort and peace of your heart; and be not displeased with me, if I say that the remarkable similarity between this picture and the young stranger, — who accidentally bears a name which reminds you of the disturber of your peace — appears to me to be a new gift of the saints, which they have procured for you from God by their prayers. You say that the young lady of Milan was favorably inclined to you — how, now, if she had sent, in the living form of this young man, a remembrance of herself to you? If you do not receive him into your house, will it not look as if you would not accept of this heavenly gift, sent by the dear saints? Your eyes will soon become accustomed to the beautiful features of the young stranger, and your heart will again rejoice in pleasant reminiscences of years long gone by."

"Your observations please me right well, my child," said Homberg; "but," he then continued, with wrinkled brow, "I have told you already that the wicked one also possesses his right and power. My whole heart trembles when I see this young man — his bare name drives the blood to my head. It will be difficult for me to become accustomed to his presence."

"Only try it, dear father," said Catharine, in her most winning style. "I will do everything in my power to drive away the evil spirit from you. You have never yet

refused me a request—do not refuse this one. Allow this young man to live here. Everything will turn out better than you imagine, particularly if you send Margaret to aunt, in Magdeburg.”

“Yes, Margaret must leave the house,” said he, passionately. “On her head, in her blind eyes, lies the curse of the deceiver and murderer! She shall leave the house this very day.”

For the first time, both of them now seemed to remember that Margaret was in the room: they both at the same time looked alarmed, and as if in expectation of a reply, towards the corner which the poor girl usually occupied, as a place of exile in the house.

Margaret awakened, as out of the sleep of death; a glowing red suffused her pale cheeks, and even around her sightless eyes there played a lustre, like a reviving spark of life. She elevated her right hand to heaven, and slowly and solemnly uttered these words: “It is written, *I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the sins of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.*” Then she let her hand drop; the lustre around her eyes vanished, and the usual corpse-like pallor again spread over her face.

This language fell like a clap of thunder on the conscience of the father. Maddened with rage, he rushed on the poor girl, and seized her violently by the throat.

But she stood perfectly still, and did not even move a finger.

But Catharine, filled with alarm, sprang up, tore away his hand from the neck of her sister, and exclaimed, “Father, for the sake of all the saints, spare her! It is enough for you to drive her from the house.”

“Curse upon you!” cried Homberg, in the rage of his accusing conscience. “Curse upon you, you child of the devil and of hell!”

And the wretched father lifted up his hand, and dealt repeated blows on the head and face of his poor blind daughter.

But she stood still, and opened not her mouth. She endured it all, like a lamb led to the slaughter; and her eyes were dry, like a sealed fountain.

He then seized her by the arm, and exclaimed, “Death and damnation shall be your portion, if you ever enter this door again!”

And he violently thrust her out of the house.

CHAPTER VII.

PRIDE AND GUILT.

And after these things he fell sick, and perceived that he should die.

2 MACCAB. i. 5.

WHEN Leonard Fichtner hastened away from Veit Dietrich and Margaret, he felt his heart burning with indignation at the inhuman conduct of Homberg. This emotion arose from two sources: partly, from common human sympathy with the unfortunate girl, thus barbarously expelled from her father's house; and partly, as it

now of a sudden became apparent to him, from a deeper and more tender feeling, — from hearty affection — by which he felt himself mysteriously drawn to the poor blind maiden.

Conflicting thoughts occupied his mind, on the way to Homberg's house: but as often as he thought of avenging the wrong done to Margaret, he, as it were, heard her request, *Think of your solemn promise!* and his revenge was then changed into painful sympathy with the wretched man. But what was he to do? — what was it *necessary* to do?

"Oh," said he to himself, "I know only one on earth who can advise and help in this case: it is Martin Luther, whose words are thunderbolts, which can burst the rocks of a petrified conscience. It is only that powerful man, before whom I feel tempted to fall down, in admiration of his evident commission from God, — it is he, *lamb* and *lion* at the same time, who raises up and strikes down, wounds and heals, with the word which the spirit of God utters by his lips. That *must* be the spirit of God which speaks through him — I feel it in the happy agitation of my heart, in the indescribable joy which pervades my soul, like a reflection of the divine glory, whenever he speaks of Jesus Christ."

"Yes," continued he, in his soliloquy — "now I know, from my own experience, how you, my good and sainted mother, became more and more ardent in your longings after the Lord, when we spoke to you. We thought we were satisfying your thirst, in the troubles of your soul, and we ourselves as yet had no opened fountain in us. Now, you *see*, while we yet *believe* — but, thank God! are still happy in hope and faith."

In the mean time, he had arrived at Homberg's house. Contending with newly awakened feelings of revenge and the Christian spirit of reconciliation and mercy, he entered the family room.

Catharine was alone. Her eyes were red with weeping; and she sat on Margaret's seat in the corner, and she let her rosary run mechanically through her hand. When she saw the young man enter, she hastily sprang up, covered her eyes with her hands, and attempted to escape from the room.

"Stop, Miss Catharine," cried Fichtner, "I wish to ask you a question. Where is your sister Margaret?"

She cast a look of disappointed hope and reproachful accusation on him, and hastened towards the door.

"Catharine!" he exclaimed, more urgently still, and endeavored to stand before her, to prevent her egress — "you may think of me what you please, but you shall not leave this room before you answer my question. I ask you, where is your sister Margaret?"

"What right, Sir, have you to ask the question?" she replied earnestly and haughtily. "You have not yet even been received into our family, and you already wish to exercise authority."

"Would to heaven," replied he, "that greater authority had never been exercised in this house! I ask you, the third time, where is your sister? — You do not answer," he continued, as Catharine looked scornfully at him. "Catharine, no power shall force me away from here. I shall follow you wherever you go — I shall cry after you through the walls of your chamber, until you answer me — where is Margaret?"

This earnest, energetic address, brought her to a stand.

With downcast eyes, and with hesitation, she replied, "I do not know."

"You do not know?" repeated Fichtner, and then continued, in deep sadness: "that is, you do not know where your and your father's ill-treatment has driven her; but, Catharine, you well know *why* she is not here."

"I had no part in it," replied the girl in the unfeeling tone of self-righteousness.

"You had no part in it?" asked he. "Yes, when you let your rosary slip through your fingers, and repeat your paternosters and your Ave Marias, then, you think, you have expiated your part in it. Poor girl!—if your *tears* were only woven into a rosary, there would then be some Christianity in it, provided that at every tear you said, *I am a poor sinner!* and then went, and fell on the neck of your sister, or rather at her feet, and said, I have sinned against you, and I am not worthy to be loved by you."

"You are abusing my patience and forbearance, Sir!" vehemently replied Catharine.

"Not yet, dear Miss," said Fichtner, calmly. "I only wish to impress on your mind your portion of the guilt which you have contracted on your sister's account, and which you do not wish to acknowledge. Miss Catharine, your sister is blind, but do you not know that the eye of God *sees for her!* Who made you a mistress over your sister? Who has helped to build up this wall between the blind daughter and her deluded father? Your sister was nursed in the same paternal lap with you, and what privilege have you over her?"

"The curse of our family rests on Margaret," replied Catharine, insolently.

"Yes," added Fichtner, sorrowfully, "just as the curse of a sinful man rests on the innocent lamb he offers as a sacrifice. Miss Catharine, do you really feel yourself relieved since you have laid your sin on your poor sister?"

"My sin?" exclaimed the girl in proud defiance; "do you know any wrong I have done? What sin can *you* charge against me? Would to heaven that your conscience were as pure as mine!"

"Poor, deluded woman!" continued Fichtner. "It is true you only bear the guilt of the Church and her priests; you have not been taught better, although you here live at the fountain of gospel truth, and have nothing to do but to draw up its life-giving waters. But you will not. Shall I tell you what burdens your conscience? You are taking advantage of your father's prejudices and of his disturbed conscience, to promote your own proud and selfish ends, and to the injury of your sister. You think that you love your father, but you deceive yourself and him; you are only flattering him so that, in his folly and weakness, he may contribute to your vanity. You think that you are good and kind to your blind sister, but your goodness is proud condescension, and your kindness is a mockery of sisterly affection. You think you are doing your duty, but you do not really know what moral obligation before God means. You think that you have no sin, but your heart is bound fast in the chains of iniquity. You think you are at peace with God when you have prayed over your rosary and gone to confession, and performed the prescribed penance with sighs and groans. Alas, you do not know what peace with God is, for you do not know how *deeply* you have fallen. You are contented when you have reconciled yourself to the Church! Poor, deluded girl! Have

you the power of settling your account with God, in which the angel of justice has recorded all the tears which your pride, despotism and cruelty have caused your sister to shed? One single tear of her's puts all your false peace to shame!"

"Be silent; cease your reproaches, Sir!" exclaimed Catharine, with angry impatience. "You speak of my sin! do you know what my sin is? I have sinned in listening to you, an apostate from holy mother Church; in being weak and foolish enough to intercede in your behalf with my father; in being moved by false sympathy, and in being willing to receive you, a homeless stranger and a heretic, in my father's house. Now I see, also, what my father's first sight of you betrayed to him: falsehood is your weapon, and fraud your daily practice. Your name conveys a lie, and your face is the index of deception!"

"Catharine!" said the young man, sorrowfully, "you have fallen deeper than I had supposed! the Lord have mercy on your poor soul!"

"Spare your sympathy for yourself!" she retorted, insolently, and with an air of triumph. She then hastened to the bureau, and violently tearing open the drawer, took out the likeness, and holding it up to his face, asked, "Do you know this picture?"

Scarcely had Fichtner's eye fallen on it, than reaching towards it with both hands, he snatched it from her, covered it with kisses, and bursting into tears, exclaimed, "My mother, my dear, good, sainted mother!"

"Really, then!" cried Catharine, alarmed; "the unhappy woman who has brought the curse on our family, is your mother?"

"Do not cast any reproach on that happy spirit!" said

Fichtner, with an imperious earnestness. "If the picture of your own mother is not altogether effaced from your heart, humble yourself before the words, *a mother's love*. Catharine," he continued, in a milder tone, as he observed that his language and manner had made an impression on her, "Catharine, I do not wish to lift the veil from a dreadful mystery in your presence, but this picture tells the bloody deeds of a thief and murderer!"

"For the sake of all the saints," now begged Catharine, terrified by his words, "give me back the picture! have compassion on me! if my father should come and see what I have done, his anger would be dreadful. Give me the picture again, and I will forgive all the wrong you have done me."

But Fichtner did not appear to hear what she said. His eyes were fixed in ecstasy on the features of the beautiful portrait. He repeatedly covered it with kisses, whilst he bathed it with tears.

"Mother," said he to himself, "I thank you for your love and your care. The Lord is my witness, I have never purposely wounded your feelings. I have loved you with my whole heart; but the better I learn to know the Lord, of whom we tried to speak to you in your dying hour, and yet knew Him not ourselves, the better I know in whom I believe; the better I know that I was not worthy of your love. Pray to the Lord for me! God will not refuse to hear the prayer of a mother! Cannot one poor sinful being pray for another?"

He sank down exhausted on an arm-chair, and pressed the picture at one time to his lips, and again to his breast.

To such pious, filial affection, Catharine could not close her heart. She looked on the young man with a melan-

choly sympathy. He did not seem to imagine the conflict which he had occasioned in her heart. But, as some hurried steps were heard in an upper chamber, she started up alarmed, and hastening towards Fichtner, she said, "Again, for the sake of all the saints, give me the picture. It will be my death, if father sees it in your hands!"

But Fichtner made no reply; he was altogether absorbed in the likeness.

"Sir," continued Catharine, with the most anxious importunity, "you have injured me—you have been more severe even than my father has ever been—you have pierced my heart with your reproaches as with a dagger—all shall be forgiven, if you only restore me the picture?"

"Have I wounded your feelings?" asked he, whilst inward satisfaction flashed over his face. "Catharine, only tell me that I have wounded you; that would be a green spot on a dreary desert. Catharine, is it true that my words pain you?"

"Cruel, unfeeling man!" replied she, and shuddered. "You are refreshed with my sorrows? you rejoice at my sufferings? There is something so incomprehensible about you, that I may well be filled with fear!"

"Incomprehensible?" repeated Fichtner; "say rather *mysterious*! Catharine, it is *faith in the Lord*, as the only Mediator and Redeemer, that constitutes the mystery between us. You do not yet know the sorrow from which eternal joy flows forth. You feel the pain of the wound, but you do not yet long after the real balsam which alone can heal and refresh. You seek for a cure and help in man, when God alone can save. You say you are filled with fear; now know, that fear is the way that leads to love."

At these words, Catharine's cheeks were covered with deep red, and her eyes were cast down; a melancholy proof that as yet she had no conception of what Fichtner meant. He was about to explain himself more fully, when a startling noise proceeded from the upper chamber, as though a heavy burden had fallen to the floor.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Catharine, alarmed, "What was that? That was in father's chamber!" and without further hesitation she rushed up stairs.

"Why is it so hard?" said the young man sadly to himself. "I have been taught by experience that we cannot learn to love God before we have feared Him; we fly to His mercy and grace until His justice has alarmed us. How now can Catharine love God, and comprehend His grace in Christ, when she does not fear the judgment of God? And that is the grievous fault of the church, which makes the wrath of God something like a human passion and infirmity, and teaches a repentance and reconciliation which may indeed unite separated hearts among sinful men, because a man, for the sake of his own peace, dare not hold his neighbor to too strict an account, but which will never stand before a just and holy God, who does not require any human indulgence for Himself. And is it not pride alone which diffuses this spiritual blindness and self-righteousness in our hearts? Unless a man humble himself under the mighty hand of God, he can neither know himself nor his Lord."

This soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of Catharine. Trembling and alarmed, she returned and said, "May the saints preserve us from danger! Father has locked the door; he does not answer me, nor does he move. Mr. Fichtner, for the sake of the holy virgin, do not for-

sake me now. I know not what I shall do! my heart is almost breaking with alarm!"

"Is it your father's custom to lock the door after him?" said Fichtner.

"He has done it occasionally," she replied, "and always on such days when he was particularly dejected or excited. But when I knocked, he always answered me. God help me; I know not what I shall do. It seems to me as if I myself had done something wrong."

"Will you allow me to go up with you?" asked he. "Perhaps your father will answer me?"

"I should be pleased," replied she, with hesitation. "But do not take it unkindly when I tell you that he has an unaccountable antipathy to you. I fear that even the sound of your voice might excite his anger. God help me; what shall I do?"

"For your own sake, nothing else remains to be done!" said Fichtner, and advanced towards the stairs. "Something may have happened to your father that requires immediate help."

Catharine could not oppose him, and she followed him up the narrow staircase. He applied his ear to the designated door — but everything was silent as death.

"Are you sure that your father is in here?" he enquired.

"He can be nowhere else," she answered; "besides, I distinctly heard the sounds of his steps overhead. — Father!" she cried out loudly and anxiously — "Father, for the sake of all the saints, answer me! It is I — your Catharine. Father, for the Holy Virgin's sake, open the door!"

All was silent as death within. In desperation, she

rattled at the latch, and wept and screamed, so that the whole house resounded with her cries: but yet all was silent within.

“Do you speak!” she now begged the young man, in the height of her anguish. “Even if he gets angry at me — I can endure this dreadful anxiety no longer.”

“Mr. Homberg!” cried Fichtner, and knocked lightly at the door. “Open! — do not compel me to use violence. We have come to help you.”

No sound was heard within. The echo came back, hollow and startling, as out of a chamber of death.

“Jesus, Mary!” exclaimed Catharine, “father is dead. I will die with him!” And, as though her wish were about to be gratified, she became deadly pale, and, staggering against the wall, fell on the floor.

“Good God!” said Fichtner, whilst a sudden tremor seized his limbs, and his eyes became moist. In the chamber there was a dying or dead man, and outside, a dying daughter — and he alone with both, without help or counsel. This double calamity oppressed his heart almost beyond endurance. His only weapon, in these trying circumstances, was prayer. He fell on his knees beside Catharine, and offered a fervent petition to Heaven for help.

A glance at Catharine’s helpless condition brought his mind to calmer consideration. He hastened down stairs, and sought for water; but he could find no vessel, and only in the yard, near Homberg’s workshop, did he see a large cask, filled with rain-water. He immersed his handkerchief in it, hurried up stairs, and bathed her hands and face. He had the gratification of seeing her recover from her fainting fit, and as she was too weak to walk, he car-

ried her to a chair, and said, "Miss Catharine, for Christ's sake, take courage, and compose yourself. Pray to God for strength and filial submission to His holy will. We do not yet know what has happened to your father; but, if you wish to share my hope, I can tell you, that, as certainly as I believe in the grace of God through Christ, so certain I am that your father is yet alive. His time to die has not yet come. Catharine, let me do what I consider necessary on this occasion."

"Do what you please, Sir," said she, with a weeping voice; "but do my father no injury."

"Only be silent," he continued; "I will do him no harm."

He returned to the door, and repeated his calls — "Mr. Homberg, answer! — open the door. For the sake of your soul, answer!"

No answer was heard.

"I know that he is dead!" said Catharine, and wrung her hands in despair.

"He is not dead," replied Fichtner, in a tone of earnestness; "his time has not come, and my faith shall not be disappointed. Now," he continued, "we will try the last remedy."

He bent down below the latch, where there was a crack in the panel of the door, through which the sound of his voice might be more distinctly heard. "Mr. Homberg," said he, in a solemn tone, "think of *Maria Barchi* and *Leonardo Pinetta*! — the dead have risen, and live!"

Scarcely had these words been uttered, when a distinctly audible breathing was heard in the room. It was deep, heavy respiration, succeeded by sighs and half-suppressed groans, and they proceeded from the floor of the chamber.

"God of heaven!" shrieked Catharine; and, springing from the chair, she threw herself on her knees at the door, and cried aloud, "Father, dear father! for the sake of all the saints, answer, and open the door. Some accident has happened to you, and I have come to help you. It is I — your Catharine — your dear child!"

But all her prayers and lamentations were of no avail; it became still again within, as at first.

"I believe," said Fichtner, earnestly, "that the name of another child would have more influence on him now, than yours. Mention the name of Margaret to him, and he will answer you."

"I cannot do it," she replied, with a long-drawn breath. "I dare not do it!" she suddenly added, and looked on Fichtner with the melancholy air of one imploring a favor. "Sir, on that name rests the curse of my father and of his family."

"Unhappy, deluded woman!" exclaimed the young man. "How hard it is to rescue a soul out of the bonds of error and superstition! Yet," he continued, after a pause, "this affair does not so much concern you, as your poor, unhappy father. Catharine, I know no other way; I must burst open the door. Will you allow me?"

"Do what is necessary," she replied; "only spare my father!"

And now, after he had in vain repeated his calls, the robust young man pressed against the door with all his strength — it began to crack and split; the lock flew off, and the door opened with such violence that Fichtner was thrown to the floor. He quickly rose up, but not quick enough to prevent Catharine from rushing, with a loud shriek, and prostrating herself upon the body of her father, lying on the floor, with his face turned downwards.

Fichtner's keen eye immediately observed what had occurred. Directly above the unhappy man, there hung a broken rope fastened to a beam.

"*Judas Iscariot!*" he cried out, with trembling voice; "do you know no other help in your time of need? but the Lord is gracious and merciful. Now I am sure that the prayer of my mother is heard. You will not be lost."

"But," he continued, turning to the lady, "your father cannot remain lying here thus. Prepare his bed."

When Fichtner had raised up the helpless body of Homberg from the floor and looked into his face, he became alarmed. He plainly saw insanity marked in every feature. The wretched man gazed stupidly into the eyes of the young man, and made no resistance.

"And this, too, establishes my faith and hope," said Fichtner, in a tone of confidence. "Poor man! you will not be lost yet! the Lord is gracious and merciful, and whatsoever he does is well done!"

And with gigantic strength he conveyed the heavy, unconscious body of Homberg in his arms to the bed that had been prepared. "What is the name of your physician," Fichtner asked.

"Doctor Schurff," she replied, still weeping. "Have you any hope that my father will recover, and that the physician can help him?"

"I hope so, because it is the will of God!" replied the young man. And as Catharine now threw herself on her knees by the bedside of her father, and folded her hands and prayed, Fichtner said,

"It is proper for you to pray, Catharine! but pray, not only that your father may live and recover, but pray

also for his soul. And," he added, in a subdued voice, "pray for yourself, also!"

And with this he left the chamber and went for the physician.

CHAPTER VIII.

A COMPANY OF THEOLOGIANS.

In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death. — PROV. xii. 28.

A FEW evenings after the events recorded in the last chapter, Dr. Augustine Schurff, the celebrated physician of Wittenberg, entered the portal of the Augustinian convent, and met Madam Catharine Luther on the lower floor.

"Doctor," said she, "I knew that you would be here this evening, and I have been waiting for you with impatience. I do not deny it, I am much concerned about my dear husband. Since yesterday, he is unusually desponding, and in a more distressed state of mind than I have ever seen him. He does not believe he is sick, and looks upon it only as a spiritual temptation. Heaven only knows what has happened to him. I fear he will not tell you anything about his condition, hence, I will kindly request you to ask him about it yourself."

“With great pleasure, madam!” replied the physician. “But be not alarmed; there is no danger. The Doctor cannot yet leave us and his sacred cause; that which God has begun through him, He will also through him finish. That is my firm conviction; hence, be not alarmed.”

Madam Catharine eagerly listened to these consoling words, yet it was evident, from her whole demeanor, that all her anxiety was not removed. She followed the physician up stairs, and proceeded towards her chamber, whilst Schurff entered the study of Luther.

He there found a company of men, all of whom he recognized as the faithful friends and zealous co-operators of Luther. These were Philip Melanchthon, the emaciated man with the deeply furrowed, but amiable and serene countenance; John Bugenhagen, usually called Dr. Pommer, pastor of the city church, distinguished by his long, heavy beard, covering his whole breast; Justus Jonas, Professor and Provost of the University of Wittenberg; Veit Dietrich, Luther’s faithful Secretary, and an inmate of his house, and the noble Baron von Wildenfels. They all sat at a long, wide table, with Luther at the head.

Schurff cast a penetrating glance at Luther as he entered. He looked unusually sedate, and deep shadows had settled about his eyes, but nothing else betokening sickness was apparent.

“Welcome, dear Doctor!” exclaimed Luther. “What news do you bring from the wood-carver, Hombérg?”

“Not the most cheering, venerable Doctor!” replied the physician. “The unhappy man has fallen into a state of profound melancholy; he does not speak, and answers no questions, and has no desire for nourishment, and lets himself be fed like an infant. There is no one else but

the young Italian to whom he will listen, and even to him he makes no reply."

Luther, with an air of solemnity, thus spoke: "He who has fallen into sin should not, on that account, despair, but reform, be converted and sin no more. Judas, in betraying his Master, committed a grievous sin, but not unto death. When he was sorry for it, but yet did not, through faith, restore himself nor go to his Master and beg forgiveness, his sin became more heinous, and the result was that he despaired. I hope that God will yet restore the old man."

"I should not like to doubt it," rejoined the physician; but it is very possible that Homberg may die of the dreadful shock his constitution has received, however vigorous his health may have been."

"Yes," said Luther, in an earnest tone, "in the midst of life we are in death; and, although everybody complains of the troubles of life, yet all love it dearly, and no one willingly lays it down, although one misfortune follows another, and there is no cessation of them until death. Pliny, the heathen, has said, 'The best remedy for a man is to die early.'"

"But do you think, Doctor," asked Schurff, "that we should despise the signs of death, and not guard against danger?"

"By no means!" replied Luther. "It is true, the Emperor Julius thought it was better to die once than to be constantly on our guard and taking care of ourselves; and, although a heathen might well say so, yet the sentiment does not become a Christian. I maintain that we are not to tempt God, but to employ the means which he provides, and commit the case to him. Christians could

easily suffer and overcome death, if they did not know that it is a result of God's displeasure. It is this which renders death bitter to us. But the heathen die securely and carelessly, and do not feel that the Divine wrath is expressed by death, but think that it is merely an exhaustion of nature. The Epicureans say life is but a short, little hour at best, and then all is over. Cicero affects to be wiser, and thus speaks, 'Hereafter, when we are dead, we shall either be annihilated, or we shall be happy.' That certainly means that hereafter nothing evil can happen to us. Alas! how different the death of a Christian from that of a heathen!"

A pause now ensued, and Luther was again profoundly absorbed in reflection. Schurff interrupted the silence, and said, "Dear Doctor, it appears to me that you are somewhat dejected, as though you were thinking more of your death than of your life!"

"You are right," replied Luther. "I was just thinking that I have deserved death on more than one account. First, from God, because I am a sinner, and I am very sorry for it. Secondly, from Satan, whose kingdom of lies and iniquity I have assailed, and, hence, he naturally desires to pay me by death. For Satan, who is the author of death, is our adversary, and attempts our life. He has sworn our death, and we have deserved it; hence, we may well patiently wait for the hour."

"And do you think you are sick?" asked the physician, with deep concern.

"How shall I answer you?" said Luther. "It is true, I can now sleep little or not at all, and I often have such a ringing in the ears, and it runs through my whole head to such an extent that it seems the world were turning

round. But yet I have no particular pain, and I rather regard it as a temptation of the devil. When at night I am tossing on my bed, and hour after hour vainly trying to sleep, I dispute much with our Lord out of pure impatience, and remind Him of His promise to deliver us out of all our troubles and temptations. And at last I feel the benefit of my trials, and God teaches me to understand the Scriptures correctly, for when a man has everything his own way, he surely does not know much of God's word. Now, God will not have it that we should be too impatient. Hence, He everywhere in the Scriptures requires of us to hope and persevere. Hence, Job says, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him;' as though he would say, 'Though it appears that Thou hast turned Thy face from me, yet I will not believe that Thou art my enemy.'

"It is certainly true that many are the temptations with which the righteous are visited!" said Justus Jonas.

"Yes," replied Luther, suddenly; "but add to that, dear Dr. Jonas, that trouble, temptation, and persecution, teach the golden art of patience and true prayer. Flesh and blood do not endure them patiently; they always desire peace and freedom from anxiety. I am sometimes so cold and lifeless that I cannot pray rightly. Then I stop my ears and say, I know that God is not far from me, hence I must cry unto Him; I set before me, on the other hand, the ingratitude of the world, and the ungodly proceedings of the opponents, the fanatics, the pope, and his swarms of vermin, so that my heart grows warm and burns with holy wrath. I say, O Lord, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Thus my prayer becomes ardent!"

"One should suppose," said Bugenhagen, "that the

theology of these fanatics is not only the cause of offence to believers, but also of much other evil and misfortune in the world !”

“Yes,” replied Luther, whilst a hasty, ironical smile played on his countenance ; “there are no greater sources of mischief than the sun and moon ; for if they did not shine, there would be no robbery, adultery, and mischief. Our reason, which I designate as Madam Hulda, says our Lord is the great cause of sin ; for why did He create it ? The world,”—he continued, in a more earnest tone—“the world will have owls, that is, factions and bigots ; the birds fly towards them ; that is, the world admires them, confers honor on them, and gives them money and property enough.”

“Yes,” said Jonas, “as long as they do not devour one another. I am here reminded of the words of Hilary, who says, ‘When heretics assail each other furiously, then the church has peace.’”

“Very true, brother Jonas,” rejoined Luther. “We do not know what advantage it is to us to have opponents who are constantly attacking us. If Cerinthus had not opposed the doctrine of Christ’s divinity, John would never have written his gospel. But on that account he was compelled to write and say, ‘In the beginning was the word.’”

“In my opinion,” said Veit Dietrich, “there is no passage in the gospels more difficult of comprehension and acceptance than that doctrine of John, viz., ‘that Christ is God.’”

“My dear Veit,” replied Luther, “I have often said, and say it now, that he who will know God aright, and speculate about Him safely, must look upon Him in the

manger, and recognise Him as the son of Mary, born at Bethlehem, lying in His mother's lap, or hanging on the cross; then he will know *who* God is. Guard against the proud idea of climbing up to heaven without this ladder; that is, without the Lord Jesus Christ in his *humanity*. Just accept the simple delineation of His character as given in the Scripture, and do not allow human reason to lead you off from it; then you will apprehend God rightly! I do not wish to know of any other God than of Him who hung on the cross, namely, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and of the Virgin Mary."

"But still," said Bugenhagen, "it is not an easy thing, and requires much experience and various trials, to be able from the heart to call Christ our Lord and God, who redeems us from sin!"

"Yes, and whence does it proceed, dear Dr. Pommer?" asked Luther. "Many, like the pope, and others of the same character, speak of the Godhead of Christ, but just as a blind man does of colors. When I hear Christ speak, I believe that *the undivided Godhead* speaks. Thus, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost speak, when this language is used: 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Here the whole Godhead, in its undivided essence, speaks. Hence, when a God is represented and preached to me, who has not died for me, him I will not accept as God. He who embraces this article has the chief article of the Christian faith, although it appears very ridiculous to the world."

"I believe it firmly!" said the Baron von Wildenfels. "But excuse my weakness, dear Doctor; I do not rightly understand what you say about the whole and undivided Godhead of Christ."

“I will illustrate it by an example!” replied Luther. “Christ says, ‘The Comforter, whom I will send, will abide with you forever.’ Now, he says, ‘*I will pray the Father!*’ Before, he had said, ‘*I will do it.*’ Thus, at first he spake as God, but in the latter instance as man. Thus I learn that Christ is both God and man. So, in many instances, Christ speaks as pure man, and then again as pure God. Thus, when he says, ‘*I give eternal life,*’ these are not the words of a man alone, but of God. But when he says, ‘*I will pray,*’ this is the language of a man, and yet the *Son of God* prays.”

“Then,” said Wildenfels, “in Christ, both God and man are always present?”

“Yes, certainly, noble Sir!” replied Luther. “Allow me to use another illustration. When I say, ‘The servant has let the child fall,’ I do not mean only the body of the child, but its mind and all. Thus also, when I say, ‘The child has eaten,’ I do not mean that the mouth, but that the whole being, body, soul and all, have been refreshed. Thus we should speak of Christ.”

“How I do love to speak of him!” said the Baron. “And I wish I could fully comprehend how God became man.”

“The incarnation of Christ,” continued Luther, “is truly a great mystery, which can never be thoroughly studied out by mere human reason. It is one of the most extraordinary miracles and manifestations of God’s grace, which no human mind can altogether comprehend or appreciate. It will be a subject of study in eternity; and though I am daily engaged in the investigation of it, yet I am impatient with myself that I have not yet exhausted it; and that with all my mental faculties in full and in-

tense application, I cannot comprehend the two natures in Christ. But this mystery is not recorded that I may comprehend it with my reason, but I must submit my reason to the written word by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and give God the glory that He is true. My noble Sir, if you would keep your mind at peace, and prosecute the work of your salvation securely, I would advise you to avoid hair-splitting speculations, both about the *will* and the *essence* of God, by the mere aid of your reason. *It is only in His word, and in His Son Jesus Christ, that you will find God.* Learn to apprehend Him as He is revealed in the sacred Scriptures."

"How can we sufficiently thank you, venerable Doctor," said the Baron, "for having translated the Bible into our language, and explained it in your writings?"

"You must turn to Mr. Philip here," rejoined Luther, smiling; "for it was he who forced me to translate the New Testament. And as for what you say of my books, I wish you also to understand the matter distinctly. My books are nothing more than a mere scaffolding to the Bible, and they *must be read only as introductory to the sacred word*. I want people to be *Scripturists*, and not *Lutherists*; that is, such who do not believe in me, but in the Scriptures. They alone are the living fountain; all other books are only little streams flowing from it. On the Bible we can stand securely. With the Bible we can drive away devils and heretics. Hence, Carlstadt was afraid of me; for he himself says, 'I had studied the prophets and apostles ten years before he did; hence he could not prevail against me.'"

After some further conversation on the duty of subjecting our reason to the authority of the Bible, and the duty

of implicit *faith* in revelation, Veit Dietrich exclaimed, "Ah, how hard it is to be a sincere, *believing* preacher of the word!"

"And it becomes easy only through *one thing*!" added Luther. "The Scriptures demand an humble heart, which properly honors and adheres only to the Word, and which always prays, 'Lord, teach me thy ways, thy statutes.' But the Holy Spirit resists the proud, and will not dwell with him. And although some diligently study the Scriptures, and for a time preach the doctrines of Christ correctly, yet, as soon as they become proud, God turns them away. A lawyer," continued Luther, "may be dishonest, but a theologian ought to be a pious man. Hence it is that God hangs trouble, persecution, the world and the devil, round the necks of faithful preachers, that they may be kept humble, and God alone may have the glory. Seeking honor and worldly advantage in theology and the study of God's word, is like taking coals out of a fiery furnace; for a man doing that would certainly be burned."

"Hence it is," said Justus Jonas, "that it requires the longest time to study theology, and that a man of himself will never become a true theologian."

"Very true, dear Jonas," replied Luther. "I did not acquire all at once the theological knowledge I possess. I had the pope, the universities, and all the learned, and through them the devil himself, all hanging about my neck; and I have them yet. It was they who drove me to the diligent study of the Bible, and thus I attained a correct understanding of it. We cannot learn other arts without practice. What sort of a physician would you be, Dr. Schurff, if you had remained in the schools, and only read your books! You must practise your art, and the

more experience you have, the more sensibly you feel that you are not perfect in your profession. Thus also, no man can ever understand the Scriptures but by practice; I mean, through tribulation and all manner of bodily and spiritual temptations. Hence it is, dear Philip, that you also have your tribulations, just as I have."

"You do me too much honor, dear Doctor, in comparing me with yourself!" replied Melanchthon.

"Not at all, my brother," rejoined Luther. "He who does not acknowledge you to be a genuine teacher, well tried in the furnace of tribulation, is ignorant and conceited. After the writings of the apostles, there are no better books than your *Loci Communes*;* and if all the writings of the Fathers were melted up together, yet there would no book come out of all equal to yours. What you write, Philip, has hands and feet; the matter is good, and the language is good. The matter of my writings is good enough, but the language is not."

"You give me too much, and yourself too little," said Melanchthon. "There is a great difference between us."

"Yes, there is!" rejoined Luther, with a good-natured smile; "I am the prophet Isaiah, and you are Jeremiah. For just as Jeremiah regretted that *he was a man of strife*, so also do you. I assail the enemy with a lance, such as we use in slaying a wild boar, but you pierce him with bodkins and needles, and such punctures are hard to heal, and hurt exceedingly. It is true, you are called a mere Master, but you are a Doctor above all Doctors. The sun does not shine on any man on earth who has such talents as you. He who despises you must be a man despised of God."

* The great Theological work written by Melanchthon.

Melanchthon was about to decline these distinguished compliments, when Madame Catharine Luther entered the room, and said, "Gentlemen, supper is ready!"

"Do you see, now?" said Luther, smiling, to Melanchthon, whom the unexpected address of the good housewife had prevented from replying, "My Katy has shut you up. Your opportunity is gone. But come, let us not delay; for if we do, the lame and the halt from the street will be invited in, and then there will be nothing left for us."

And all the guests accepted the invitation of Catharine.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COMPANY AT SUPPER.

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

EPHES. v. 19.

MADAM Catharine Luther had prepared a simple meal for her guests, which was by no means to be compared to the luxurious suppers of the present day.

Luther himself asked the blessing. He began with the words of the Psalmist, "The eyes of all wait on thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season." He then

pronounced the Lord's Prayer, and thus concluded, "Lord God, Heavenly Father, bless unto us these gifts, which we receive from Thy merciful hand, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen!"

Dr. Schurff, during the whole of the preceding conversation, had not taken his penetrating eyes from Luther, and his previous view of the character of his sickness was thereby almost entirely changed. Whilst at his first entrance, he observed in the looks and actions of the great man unmistakeable evidence of mental and bodily suffering, yet, during the conversation in which Luther took so active a part, all signs of sickness had vanished. His eyes had resumed their clear, penetrating glance; the relaxed skin of his face had become tense as usual, and a fresh, healthy glow was diffused over every feature. The physician shook his head with a portentous mien, and softly said to himself, "This is a strange piece of business! May God direct all for the best!"

"I once asked you, dear Doctor," thus began Melancthon, "whether you could not cite a passage of Scripture of which I would not become tired. You replied, 'There is nothing which a man could always like, and of which he would never grow weary.' Now it appears to me there is one exception, and I have just heard it repeated by you. I mean the Lord's Prayer!"

"Yes, yes, there you have me fast, my Philip!" said Luther, smiling. "But do not forget, that no one but a true Christian, who has the spirit of grace and prayer, knows what a strong tower the Church and believers possess in that blessed Lord's Prayer. Oh! He who composed it was a perfect master of language, for it embraces all things necessary for faith and practice!"

"All things?" asked the physician. "Everything that is necessary for man in time and eternity in these few words?"

"Yes, *all things*," avowed Luther; "for only observe, the *first three* petitions embrace such grand, glorious and heavenly subjects, that no mind can ever fathom them, and they bind Heaven and Earth together. The *fourth* comprehends all government, all civil and domestic discipline, and everything necessary for soul and body in this life. The *fifth* militates against a bad conscience; against hereditary and actual sin, and everything which occasions a bad conscience. The *sixth* and *seventh* include watchfulness and self-inspection with regard to temporal and eternal things."

"One thing, however, is not so plain to my mind," said the Baron. "Why has Christ dictated this prayer altogether in the Jewish style, that is, why has he mentioned the Father only, for those who pray are heard only for the Son's sake, and yet there is no allusion to him?"

"My opinion is," said Luther, "that Christ did not desire to be *hallowed* distinctly from the Father *before his death*, and our dear Lord knows well that when we look to the Father, we also look to Him, for He and the Father are one. I would rather lose my property, yea, my life, than be offended with or find any difficulty about the Lord's prayer. I use it constantly; and much as I love the Psalms, and often as I mingle a Psalm with it, yet I admire this above them all."

After a short pause, during which they were partaking of Catharine's simple repast, Justus Jonas began: "Doctor, whilst you were speaking a moment ago about the contempt which ungodly people entertain for the word of

God, I thought of a nobleman near Meissen, who gives himself no anxiety about anything but making money and increasing his estate, and he is so thoroughly blinded that he is perfectly indifferent about the Scriptures. Very recently, our gracious Prince, John Frederick, was conversing with this nobleman on the subject of the Gospel, as you may well suppose, without effect. The reply of this nobleman was, "Most gracious Sir, the Gospel is good enough for people in low life, but it does not concern your princely Grace."

When Luther heard this, he laughed loud, and asked, "Was there any bran there?"

The guests looked at each other, and none knew what Luther meant by these words.

"You do not understand it," continued he, smiling. "Well, then, I'll tell you a little story: once on a time the lion invited all the beasts and prepared a glorious meal for them, and the swine was also invited. When all the sumptuous dishes were served round, the swine looked about enquiringly, and asked, '*Is there any bran here?*' Thus," continued Luther, after the laughter of his guests had subsided, "thus it is with our Epicureans. We preachers set before them in the churches the most nourishing and savory food, for instance, eternal salvation, pardon of sin and Divine grace; but they turn it over and over with the same instrument that the swine employs, and try to smell out the dollars! What does a cow want with nutmegs — she would rather eat oat-straw!"

"Why, the Emperor of Turkey is a better Christian than that!" said the Baron.

"Oh! Baron!" exclaimed Luther, with surprise, "how can you compare the crescent with the cross?"

"Allow me to tell it," said the Baron. "You know that recently an embassy was sent to the Turks; among other things, the Turkish emperor asked the ambassador what sort of a man that Luther was, of whom the whole world is now speaking, and how old he was? When the ambassador replied that you were about forty, the Turk exclaimed, 'I wish he were younger, for he would find in me a patron and friend!'"

"May God preserve me from such patrons!" replied Luther, quickly. "It is true, the Turk holds Christ in high esteem; he also honors Mount Horeb, but he will never build Jerusalem. No one will ever overcome the Turk excepting *that* man called Christ, and His unconquerable weapon, the Gospel."

"And that is the only thing which will accomplish the same result among us," added Melancthon. "I often think that we have many Turks here in Wittenberg, who speak much of Christ, and give the law due honor; but Jerusalem, I mean the holy Zion, they will never build up in their hearts. I have even heard that some of them have no particular fancy for your sermons, and prefer other preachers."

"I cheerfully give them the honor, dear Philip," answered Luther, "and am not jealous of the preference given to them. I well know why the people thus judge. There are preachers who relate to the people all sorts of entertaining stories and anecdotes. I myself have sometimes heard them making allegories of the books of Joshua and Kings, and forcing in spiritual illustrations in a very unnatural manner. This pleases the common people, but it is not edifying. I could also be a master of this style of preaching, if I wished."

"What do you mean by that, dear Sir?" asked his wife.

"Well," replied he, smiling; "I will illustrate the style of these clerical buffoons by an example. My dear hearers, Fever is a disease, Rhubarb is an antidote against it. But do you know the spiritual interpretation of this? In the *first* place, Fever represents sin; Rhubarb represents Jesus Christ. *Secondly*, Fever represents a fault or omission; Rhubarb is the antidote. *Thirdly*, Fever is damnation; Rhubarb is the Resurrection. Do you not see, dear Katy, that such preaching is mere jugglery, and is in no respect profitable?" Now, turning to his guests, he continued, "When I was yet a ragged monk, I was an adept in spiritual interpretation, and I allegorized everything. Afterwards, when, by studying Paul's Epistle to the Romans, I learned something about Christ, I discovered that this method of illustration was useless; I saw, not what Christ *represents*, but *who* and *what* he really is. And I now regard it as my chief accomplishment, to explain the Scriptures simply."

"And what do you mean by that?" asked the physician. "The Scriptures are in many places so obscure and difficult, that it is hard to find out their meaning."

"The difficulty," quickly replied Luther, "is not so much in the Scriptures as in the mind of the reader. Everything necessary for our salvation is plain enough. The mysteries of God no human mind can fathom; but all the doctrines and duties necessary to be understood, the humble believer can learn and practise. Let us adhere to the plain *word*—it has life and power. To convert everything into an allegory, and give it a spiritual signification, is foolish and contemptible, though it is much

admired. But it is to be lamented that the people find pleasure in such trifling. When a man preaches on justification, and shows that we become righteous before God by faith in Christ, the people do not regard such a man as eloquent, and do not willingly hear him. They begin to sleep, or at least grow weary; but let a preacher relate anecdotes and tales, all ears are open, and everybody is silent and attentive."

"I do not undervalue my profession," said the physician, "but I do think it is the most difficult thing to be a real preacher of the gospel, particularly if he aims at popularity among men."

Luther smiled, and said, "Dr. Schurff, it is difficult and not difficult, and I can tell you what qualifications a preacher must have who wants to please the world and himself. First, he must be *learned*; for then the people will admire his lofty language, even if he does not understand it himself. Secondly, he must have a *fine and pleasing address*; the people are delighted with this, and it does not touch the heart or conscience. Thirdly, he must be *eloquent*, and be able to relate many entertaining stories, particularly such as have to do with faith and repentance. Fourthly, he must have a *commanding personal appearance*, so that he may attract and please the ladies. Fifthly, he must *take no compensation* for his labor and trouble, but be constantly giving away money. And sixthly, he *must only preach what the people want to hear*. Such a preacher is always welcome to the world!"

"It has been so in all ages," said Bugenhagen. "The prophets, the apostles, the Fathers, all complained of it, just as we do. The great mass of people has always been satisfied with that which is merely external. They receive

and enjoy the favors of God, but they return Him nothing but ingratitude, if not blasphemy!"

"Yes," continued Luther; "when I read Paul's description of the heathen world, in the first chapter of Romans, it appears to me he has painted a picture of the unbelieving world in all ages. The world will exercise neither faith nor love."

"I think it is easier to find love than faith!" said Dr. Schurff. "I have often witnessed genuine works of love, where faith was not very strong!"

"Do not err, Doctor," exclaimed Luther. "A Christian work of love without Christian faith is impossible. Christian love only does good for *God's and Christ's sake*, and serves every man as far as it can, *without reference to selfish interest*. But the world does good for the sake of reward, honor or profit. The world does not know that faith is a certain, necessary confidence *only in the grace and mercy of God* revealed and manifested to us in Christ, but men generally think faith is nothing more than a bare idea about God, who demands of us a pious life, and the observance of His commandments."

"Then your opinion is, Doctor," observed the physician, "that Christian love is fundamentally nothing else than love for God's sake, and the acceptance of Divine grace and mercy."

"Exactly so, Dr. Augustine," replied Luther. "The love which the world practises *loses sight of the object* about which it should be employed. First, it loses sight of *God*, for it regards him as an enemy. Secondly, it loses sight of *our neighbor*, for it does not recognize any one as its neighbor but itself. Thirdly, it loses sight of *opponents*, and does not dream that opposition often leads

to the exercise of genuine love. In a word, the world does not understand the command, '*Love thy neighbor as thyself.*' Hence, it is inimical to everything that is of God, that is, His word and His people."

"That is equivalent to saying," remarked Melanchthon, "that it is impossible to govern the world by laws."

"Certainly, Philip," added Luther. "You might as well try to guide a wild horse of the plains with bit and bridle, as to govern the world, that will know nothing of God, with laws. The world is intractable and unbridled, and will not be subject to any rules. You have, dear Philip, given the best picture of the world in your grammar," he continued, smiling: "look at some of your *irregular verbs*, they will not be conjugated according to rule like other verbs, but they go this way and that way, sideways and backwards, without order or method. Then you have *defective verbs*, which do not suit here nor there, and are full of aberrations. Just so it is with the world, which will not allow itself to be governed by laws, nor brought under proper discipline. Hence, I say that the world is the devil's bride, who rides her and drives her so hard that she willingly submits to the exactions of her cruel husband. The world is like a drunken boor; if you lift him on the saddle from one side, he falls down on the other. You cannot help him, do what you will. Thus, the world *will* belong to the devil. Hence, let us watch and pray; Satan will certainly not sleep."

As Luther here ceased, his servant, Wolff, entered, and brought a letter for Doctor Pommer, besides a small, heavy bag, both of which he laid on the table, observing, that it was delivered here in the convent as the messenger had not found Doctor Pommer at home.

Bugenhagen opened the letter, and opened his eyes the wider the farther he read.

"This is a very singular affair!" he finally said. "Here some unknown person sends me a hundred guilders, which he commissions me to deliver to you as a present, Doctor Martin."

"Just see here, Doctor Augustine," said Luther, smiling, "you have conjured up just such a work of love which you were speaking of a while ago."

The physician blushed, and assured him, in evident embarrassment, that he knew nothing about it.

"Oh! I believe that, dear Doctor," continued Luther. "When the world wants to do something showy, it always does it of itself."

During this conversation, Bugenhagen had opened the bag and had poured out the clinking guilders on the table. "Only see," said he, laughing, "how rich you have become, Doctor Martin."

"Do you seriously think," exclaimed Luther, in an earnest tone, "that my hand will ever touch that gift? No, I will be satisfied with what I have."

"But it is an honest gift!" said the Baron, "and you have full right to it."

"Good," said Luther. "As I have a perfect right to it, then, dear Philip, I will give you the half of it. Your wife Catharine, will not be displeased with it, and your Anna is old enough to play with the guilders. The other half you will take, Doctor Pommer, and you may do with it what you like."

But both Melanchthon and Bugenhagen resisted, and besought Luther not to refuse the present. The physician added: "If you do not accept it, the people, who will

certainly find it out, may say that Doctor Pommer was not grateful, and kept the money for himself."

Luther's face and manner betrayed the most serious earnestness, and he said: "It is just on account of such people that I will not accept it. They want to judge Doctor Pommer, who is a pious and honest man, whilst they themselves are the most ungrateful of men. Do you know why they give Doctor Pommer, me, and others such presents? They want to whitewash themselves by such acts, whilst they rob and steal where they can. I know such people well; these people must be feared though they do bring gifts."

"But what shall be done with the money?" enquired Bugenhagen.

"You may see to it how it may be returned to the donor," replied Luther. "God preserve me from avarice and mammon. It makes us secure, leads to forgetfulness of God, and is the source of many sorrows. But," said he, interrupting himself, "look out on the heavens! what a glorious evening this is! let us go and walk in the garden half an hour before we separate. But we must first return thanks."

The guests all rose, and Luther offered a fervent prayer, including a portion of a psalm, the Lord's Prayer and devout thanksgiving.

They then followed him to the garden.

CHAPTER X.

LUCAS KRANACH, THE BURGOMASTER AND PAINTER.

Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.—MATT. 18 : 3.

It is time for us to pay some attention to the poor girl who had been driven from her father's house.

We find her in the house of the magistrate and painter, Lucas Kranach, surrounded by his three youngest children, Ursula, Barbara, and Anna. They are singing and dancing around Margaret, and reciting old poetical legends, whilst their jocund laugh in the intervals resounds through the whole house. Margaret is delighted with their childish sports, and in her turn offers to recite some verses, which they call for with noisy importunity. After commanding silence and fixed attention, she began in a solemn tone to repeat one of those touching old German hymns, so full of unction and power, setting forth the goodness of God, and our obligations of gratitude to Him. The children stood fixed in admiration of the charming, simple sentiment of the hymn, but more, perhaps, of the pious resignation and sincere devotion depicted on the sweet and placid countenance of Margaret.

When she ceased, there was a pause. It was suddenly interrupted by Master Kranach himself, who, with his painter's rod, pencil, and pallet in hand, had entered the room, and said, "Margaret, it is beautiful! and you recited it with so much tender feeling! It was not a mere utterance of the words, but you entered into the spirit,

and your own heart was touched with their power. Margaret, when you came into my house, a real treasure entered it. I see very well that I shall have to transfer my workshop into some other room; for how can I paint carefully whilst I hear your sweet voice? It distracts my attention, and I do not know what I am doing!"

"Pardon me, venerable Sir!" entreated the blind girl. "I was afraid we should disturb you, but I could not resist the importunity of the children."

"That is just what pleases me; I hope you may never be able to resist it," exclaimed Kranach. There is something in your tones of voice and your words that compels us to listen, whether we will or no. Margaret, you know I do not trifle with my language; but I must say, God has sent my children a good angel in you!"

"How can you speak thus of me, a poor unworthy girl?" modestly said Margaret. "Will you praise me because I have spoken to your children about God and our Saviour? I only do that to which my heart prompts me. Ah! if I dare speak of it, how happy I feel that in you and your dear wife I have found those who sympathize with my faith and hope. I can never repay you for furnishing me, a poor discarded daughter, a place of refuge in your house."

"If there were any merit in the act, then I could boast of it," replied Kranach, in the kindest manner. "But it is not my doing. When Doctor Martin sent to enquire whether I could take you into my family, I instantly answered, yes, yes, with all my heart; for that which Doctor Martin sends and gives, he himself first received from God!"

Margaret shook her head with a painful expression of

face, and said, "Never, never! can a child discarded by her father, be a gift of her father!"

"Certainly, Margaret!" he rejoined. "Unbelieving and impenitent sinners are also instruments in the hands of God. I will remind you of the passage of Scripture which Doctor Martin recently quoted, 'There must needs be offences, but wo unto those by whom they come.'"

"Your design is to comfort me, dear Sir," said she, "but you only deepen my wounds. Do not your words express a sentence of condemnation against my father?"

"The Lord deliver me from that!" responded Kranach. "Judgment belongs to Him; and firmly as I believe in the word that the Lord does not wish any to be lost, so I also hope that your father will yet be saved."

"God bless you for that word!" exclaimed Margaret. "Now I only begin to feel how much I love my father. Although he has cursed me and cast me out, I now know that I am more dearly attached to him than ever. I can never pray to God without first of all remembering my poor father. Oh! Sir, I have not heard of him nor of my sister Catharine for three days. Do you not know how I may get to hear from them?"

"I hope," said Kranach, "that Leonardo will be here to-day. He is the only one who can keep open the way between you and your father. This young man is also an instrument of the wonderful grace of God. I do not yet know how his destiny is bound up with that of your father, but I suspect that Providence will bring about wonderful developments!"

"You are right!" said Margaret, in a melancholy tone. "If until now it has been only *sin* which has *brought* them together, I trust that it will yet be *grace* that will *hold* them together."

"Margaret," said Kranach, earnestly, "I can well understand how you can yet love your father; yea, even love him more than ever. I myself loved my dear parents only the more, when they had corrected me. Even a severe father does not easily dissolve the bond of love which binds a child to him; for God has so ordained it. But, Margaret, what I especially admire and esteem in you is, that you still love your sister; for I know that you have received nothing but harsh treatment from her, and that she sanctioned and encouraged your father's severity."

"I love Catharine, because I am suffering on her account!" responded the blind girl. "My poor sister has no idea of the wrong she has done me. My father has told her that I am the curse of his life, and hence she approves of everything he does. I tremble when I think of the time when the Holy Spirit shall open her eyes. Tears of penitence will roll down her cheeks; her conscience will be terribly alarmed; she will start back in horror from the abyss of temporal and eternal misery, on the brink of which she stood. I know that with all her ornaments and splendid dress, and with all the favoritism which father shows her, she is yet more unhappy than I am. I know too, that she wishes me at home again, but that she will not utter a word on this subject until she has learned humility at the foot of the cross. Say, Mr. Kranach, does not the Lord love us all on this very account, that we are poor, unhappy beings?"

"Margaret," replied he, earnestly, "I never would have thought that you could enlarge my view of the mysteries of God. I have never yet attained to such extensive Christian knowledge with my open eyes as you have in your blindness. That which lies spread out before your

mind as a beautiful landscape, I as a poor blind man must bring together in separate parts, and even then I do not always succeed. Margaret, tell me seriously, how do you get to know these things? Have you any special revelations from God?"

"Oh, no!" she replied. "How could I, an obscure, humble girl, ever secure such advantages? All that I know of the power and consolation of the gospel I have learned from *that* man whom God himself has sent us, dear Doctor Martin Luther. When about ten years ago, father read to me and sister the ninety-five theses, which this valorous servant of Christ nailed to the church-door, (and which, by the way, father himself at that time approved,) then, though I was but a child, the first light of a better understanding of the gospel began to shine in my soul; and for the last five years I have not missed one sermon of this dear man of God."

"And how could you do that?" asked Kranach. "How could you alone, without a friend and guide, go to church, since your father and sister are so violently opposed to the gospel?"

"My father, if he did not allow it, yet did not forbid it," she replied; "and it is for this that I cannot sufficiently thank him, and for which I willingly endured everything else. A poor boy lived next door to us, who came regularly when the bells rang, and conducted me to the house of God."

"And your father and sister never asked about what Luther preached?"

"Never!" Margaret assured him. "They cared nothing about me, and often for whole days they did not speak a word to me. That at first distressed me much,

but afterwards I recognized even in this the peculiar grace of God. For when I sat thus still and undisturbed in my corner, and reflected on everything which I heard, it often seemed to me that—— But, these are childish dreams.”

“O speak on, Margaret!” begged Kranach. “You do not know how eagerly I hear these things from you. You seem, with your blind eyes, to have quite a different life and a different light from us. Speak on, dear Margaret.”

“I often imagined,” now continued Margaret, with a fleeting blush over her snow-white cheeks, “that I was sitting among the angels, who, one after another, described to me the glory of the Lord, and the unspeakably happy life of the saints, and the mysterious union of the redeemed with the Redeemer. They told me that not only the soul, but the body, was imperishable, and that bodily and spiritually we are attached to Christ as the branch to the vine. And at another time, they spoke to me of the love of Christ to us poor mortals, and this enlarged so wonderfully to my astonished gaze, that I thought I could see, and I beheld a brightness and glory which dissolved my soul in unutterable raptures; and one angel said, ‘See! thus a human heart grows in the love of Christ.’ Oh! dear Sir, do not laugh at me. These are the happiest moments of my life.”

“God deliver me from such a sin!” replied Kranach, in an excited tone. “I cannot, indeed, comprehend what you say, but my soul trembles in adoration of the infinite grace of God, which a thousand-fold compensates that which it has denied you, and reveals to you a *new* world, inasmuch as you cannot see the *old*. But one thing you must allow me to ask you, which I do not understand.

You often say, that you *see* this or that thing. What do you mean by that, Margaret, for you cannot see at all?"

"How can I explain that?" said she, smiling. "I have often heard you and others say, 'I see this or that,' when you mean that something is really *before* you, or exists. And thus I imitate you, and use your language, when in my world there is something *so distinctly and vividly before me*, that I am sometimes tempted to extend my hand towards these dreamy forms. And everything has a form in my mind, and every word has a body."

"Wonderful child!" exclaimed Kranach. "Tell me, do you also see our dear Doctor Martin?"

"O certainly!" she replied; "and as often as I see him, I must lift my eyes upwards; for he is so great! and I often see an angel at his side, who lays his hand on the Doctor's heart, and that is always when he speaks of the Lord Jesus."

"Margaret," said Kranach, deeply absorbed, "you enchant me with your words. How poor my art and my most brilliant colors are to the magic of your conversation! Oh! if you could handle the pencil, you would have to paint the glory of the Lord."

But Margaret, smiling, shook her head, and remarked, "The glory of the Lord is the only thing in my world which has no form, and for which I have no words."

"You are right! how simple I am!" exclaimed Kranach, and relapsed into deep abstraction.

He was aroused by a knock at the door, and, as it opened, Leonard Fichtner entered.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONDITIONAL ENJOYMENT.

He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. — 1 Jch. iv. 8.

“WHAT news from Master Homberg?” asked Kranach.

“Nothing favorable,” replied the young man sadly, and saluted Margaret, whilst the three sisters welcomed him as an old friend of the family. “The poor man,” he continued, “remains in the same abstracted state; he does not utter a word; he shows no desire for food or drink, and allows himself to be fed by Catharine like an infant. Not even a word of complaint escapes his lips.”

“And does he not even mention my name?” enquired Margaret, in a desponding tone.

“No,” answered Fichtner, “and yet your name is one of the means of rousing him out of his melancholy reverie. I have twice mentioned your name to him: then he gazes at me, his listless eye acquires some life, he sighs profoundly, and then relapses into the same insensible state.”

“God help my poor father!” exclaimed Margaret.

“He will do it,” responded the young man.

“Yes, He certainly will!” added Kranach, and laid his hand on Margaret’s brow. “Be of good cheer, my child.

The Divine Shepherd and Bishop of our souls seeks with most anxiety those who have strayed away and are lost. And you, my dear Sir," turning to Fichtner, "be good enough to visit me in my painting-room. I have a few words to say to you;" and Kranach withdrew.

The young man now turned to Margaret, and said, "Are you not going to enquire about your sister Catharine?"

"Certainly, Sir! How is she disposed towards me? does she desire to know where I am?"

"I told her," continued Leonard, "that you had found a secure and happy refuge, and with that she is satisfied. If I do not deceive myself, she is anxious to know where you reside; but this question requires a contrite and penitent heart."

Margaret shook her head with a serious mien, and said, "You may be right in thus speaking of Catharine and my father, but yet your language burdens my conscience. You would make it appear that all were at fault, only not I. And yet I feel that I should have borne my troubles with greater patience. I should have prayed for the spirit of kindness and submission with more importunity. But I closed my heart in bitter obstinacy, and was silent when I should have spoken."

"You speak thus now," replied Leonard, in a tone of sympathizing tenderness, "since you have acquired more correct Christian experience, and your unhappy condition has enabled you to penetrate more deeply into the mysteries of God. "Yes, Margaret, that is also the occasion of my trouble! The more I appreciate the infinite love of God to us poor mortals, the greater is my consciousness of guilt before Him!"

"And does not that make you sad?" she enquired.

“Yes, certainly; and if I were yet influenced by the errors of Popery, I would try, by all manner of penances and good works, to atone for my guilt. But now I know that no lasting peace can be found in all these things, and that nothing can help me if I do not believe that my sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, and that the just live by faith. And because I believe this, as our Luther teaches and believes, on the basis of the Scripture, I have peace with God notwithstanding my guilt, and I am happy and comforted because my sins are forgiven; and the good works which I do in my repentance, whilst they make no atonement and bring no pardon, yet they are evidences to me and my Lord, that I believe in Him with all my heart, and obey His will!”

“Ah! why do you not continue to speak thus?” exclaimed Margaret. “I am so glad to hear you speak of that which binds me in faith and hope with other souls. Alas! hitherto I have had no one to sympathize with me in my religious views and feelings. I have been, as it were, in a strange country, where neither my language nor thoughts were understood. But now you come and speak the precious words to which my heart responds with rapture.”

Fichtner was moved by the sincerity of the poor girl, and expressed his regret that he had not as yet made the same progress in Christianity, imputing his deficiency to his perverted religious training.

Whilst they were thus conversing, the three children of Kranach had withdrawn to a corner of the room, playing and speaking in a low tone. They now advanced towards Fichtner and Margaret, and sang a verse of an old song of the pilgrims.

This led Fichtner to speak of the innocent playfulness of children, and of the providence of God over them, and he then asked: "Margaret, do you not feel that all religion must be grounded only in love?"

"Let us love Him, for He first loved us," said she. "Is it not written, 'He that *abideth* in God sinneth not?'"

"Yes," replied Leonard; "that is the language of John. But it might also be said, 'He that *loveth* God sinneth not.'"

"That is also most certainly true," she rejoined. "But for our poor hearts, there is a great difference in the words. When John says, 'He who *abideth* in God sinneth not,' I know that I shall sin as long as I remain in the world, and this keeps me humble. But if the Apostle had said, 'He who *loveth* God sinneth not,' many weak and proud hearts would believe themselves to be free from sin, because they think they love God."

The conversation was conducted very earnestly for a long time, and whilst it evinced Margaret's wonderful familiarity with the ways of God, and the mysteries of redemption, it excited Fichtner's admiration of the qualities of her heart and understanding to a higher degree than ever.

A feeling of a more tender and personal character had been gradually growing in his own heart; and whilst he acknowledged his obligations for her instructive and encouraging conversation, he at length ventured, in a trembling voice, to remark: "Margaret, let me put one question to you. We, who see, are in the habit of saying, that the heart often betrays itself in the eyes. True, your eye is dead, but your whole countenance tells me that Christ is truly your life. Margaret, you cannot see externally, but

your internal eye is wonderfully clear. Tell me, Margaret, in what light do you regard me?"

The maiden betrayed in her looks and manners the highest degree of surprise and embarrassment. "What induces you to ask such a question?" she finally enquired.

"I can endure it no longer!" he continued, in a tone indicating struggling emotions. "Margaret, my life has been remarkable, — the hand of the Lord has hitherto manifestly guided and protected me. Margaret, I have the courage to declare it: it is God's will that you and I should be united here and hereafter. Margaret, my whole heart is yours, — your name is dear to me; will you be mine, as I am yours, for life and death."

Before Leonard had finished the sentence, the blushing crimson on her cheeks had already vanished, but crystal tears were now coursing over her snow-white face. "Do not touch me now," she earnestly besought him, as she perceived that he had advanced nearer to her. "I knew it before you said it. I pray you leave me to myself."

"Margaret," exclaimed he, in painful anxiety, "will you now dismiss me from your presence?"

"It is not on your account, but mine," she replied, with a heart full of emotion. "Leave me alone, dear Sir."

"And am I to go away without answer, and without hope?" he asked. "Margaret, do you know that the blessing of my sainted mother rests on you and me? Do you know that your own reconciliation with God will be *perfected in our love?*"

"I know it all!" she replied. "I should regard your language as a trial whether I have overcome the pride of my heart. But I cannot. I know that the Lord will have

it so, and it is right that I should submit to the will of my Lord without struggle."

"Then you will be mine for time and eternity?" he asked, in an excited frame of mind.

The maiden laid her folded hands over both her eyes, and in a solemn tone replied: "When I have once laid my head on my father's heart, and his curse shall be turned to a blessing, then I shall answer you, whether you ask me or not. But now leave me alone."

But Leonard, still excited, said: "Margaret, now I understand the promise of the Lord, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Now, Margaret, you love God only, and your fear is dispelled. Now, your love is *perfect*!"

She smiled, and said: "I have never feared God more than I do this minute. Hence, leave me alone, Leonard."

"Margaret," he exclaimed, "your view extends too high for me. Draw me up to your lofty conceptions, and pray for me." And with a slow step he left the room.

CHAPTER XII.

LUTHER DESPONDING, YET HOPING.

For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him, for there is none to deliver him. — PSALMS, lxxi. 10, 11.

WE now transfer our scene to Luther's study, and there we behold a sick man. With his head supported by his hand, he sits at his table gazing at the wall; his noble face being overshadowed with deep melancholy. Melanchthon and Justus Jonas are with him, speaking words of encouragement and consolation.

"Your comfort does not reach my case," he replied. "Rather pray most earnestly for me, a poor despised worm, who is so severely tormented with a dejected and troubled spirit. Yet I will not murmur. May the good and gracious will of our merciful Father be done in all things. To Him be honor and praise and glory in all my intense sufferings!"

"Do you, in no respect, feel better?" asked Melanchthon.

"No," replied Luther, and shook his weary head. "This vertigo will yet be my death. It seems to me that all hope must be given up. An excruciating death-pain shoots through my whole soul, and takes away all comfort and confidence, just as if I had committed enormous sins

which would never be forgiven. Nothing that I do or take is of any service, though I carefully follow the advice of my physician. I sometimes even ask myself whether I did right in kindling such a fire in the Christian world."

"Dear Doctor," exclaimed Jonas, alarmed, "what do you mean by that?"

"I am enduring the wrath of God," continued Luther, deeply dejected; "for I have sinned against him. The pope, emperor, princes, bishops, and the whole world hate me, and waylay me. And this is not enough: my brethren and friends annoy me; and, in addition, my sins, death, and the devil, rave against me without ceasing."

"But they all," replied Jonas, "are subject to the *one* Lord Jesus Christ."

"Certainly," replied the sick man; "but if Christ also, for whose sake they hate me, should leave me, what then can sustain and comfort me?"

"The Lord will never do that," exclaimed Jonas, with confidence. "Are you going to deny the efficacy of the word and promise of Christ?"

"O no, dear Jonas!" replied Luther; "I am, indeed, the most unworthy of men; but the Lord will still not forsake me, a miserable sinner. Would to heaven that Erasmus and the Sacramentarians could suffer the agony of my heart, just for a quarter of an hour! How confidently I could say that they would be fully converted and brought right. But now my enemies live and are strong; they are constantly adding to my sorrows, and persecute him whom God afflicts. But"—he here assumed a more placid tone—"I must be silent and not complain too much, or become impatient of the rod, which wounds and heals, kills and makes alive. Blessed be his holy will. It cannot be

otherwise. That man *must* be pleasing to Christ, when the world and its prince hate him. If we were of the world, the world would love its own."

"But as you are not of the world, therefore the world hates you," replied Jonas, in the language of Christ. "You have only done that to which the Lord called you. You have taught the *word of God* in its purity, and have not corrupted it as the papists do; and you have not thereby sought honor nor riches."

"Yes," said Luther; "that is my only boast. I hope the gracious God, who has begun to pity me, will continue to my end; for I desire nothing so ardently as to have a gracious God." He was continuing in this strain, when, all of a sudden, he stopped, and, rising from his chair, seized the table with both hands, and, in an agitated voice, said, "I feel an awful sensation pervading my whole head which occasions unspeakable anxiety of heart; allow me to retire to my chamber for a few moments; God's help is necessary in this case, or it will soon be over with me."

Whilst he was tottering towards the door, the two friends offered their assistance; but he declined it, observing, "Excuse me; if the pope should hear that I could not walk any more without help, he would rejoice, and say, 'God is punishing Luther for his heresies.'"

He had scarcely left the room, when his physician, Doctor Augustin Schurff, entered the other door.

"What is your opinion of our dear Doctor's case?" asked Melancthon and Jonas at once.

Schurff shrugged his shoulders, and replied, "It is a mysterious and singular malady. I cannot reach it with any of the ordinary remedies. May the heavenly physician take him into his protection."

"It strikes me," said Jonas, despondingly, "that this sudden attack of our venerated friend and father is designed by Providence as a warning to us all to prepare for our own end."

"Are you apprehensive of apoplexy?" asked Melanchthon of the physician.

"May heaven avert that!" replied Schurff. "As well as I can judge, the seat of the disease is not in the head, but in the stomach. I still have hope."

"And do you know no means of dispelling the crushing melancholy from which he suffers so dreadfully?" continued Melanchthon.

Schurff reflected for a moment, and then said, "My opinion is, that the evil spirit can be expelled only by the good spirit. If you could manage to engage him in zealous controversy, I think he would recover from his despondency. The spirit of a man is powerful, and conquers bodily temptations."

"I believe you are right," said Melanchthon; "and this is the very time in which Doctor Martin should wield his two-edged sword strongly against the fanatics and Sacramentarians. Yes, we shall do that. He must consent to it. Now, dear Jonas, stand by me faithfully."

Luther re-entered just as Jonas was about declaring his approbation of the measure. His countenance indicated the composure of prayer; not, indeed, the joyous expression of perfect happiness, but yet a calm acquiescence in the will of God. When he saw the physician, he exclaimed, "Have you found that little herb which is of such service to me? Now, do not be alarmed, Doctor Augustin," he continued, when he observed that the physician was somewhat embarrassed. "If the plant grows anywhere on earth, you will certainly find it."

"Do you feel better?" said Melanchthon.

"A little better," he replied, and continued, smiling, "I now know, dear Philip, that I am Luther again! but yet I would not be too confident; the strange sensation in my head has not altogether subsided."

"Perhaps," said Melanchthon, in a jesting tone, "that painful sensation is occasioned by Erasmus of Rotterdam. His new book, which he calls *Hyperaspistes*, and which is aimed at you and our cause, roams about like an unclean spirit seeking rest in the house whence he was before expelled, according to Matth. xii. 44. Have you read that book, Doctor? and will you not answer it?"

"Not yet!" replied Luther, despondingly. "What can I, a poor sick servant of Christ, read, when I can scarcely live? how much less can I be expected to write a book? The floods of the Lord already overflow me; and even those who should sympathise with me, are heaping still more labors on me, when I already have more than I can endure. God be merciful to them!"

"Amen!" added Jonas; "and yet these wretched factions are disturbing and dividing the church fearfully. Oh, that there were some who would earnestly set themselves against the furious rage and blustering impudence of Satan, and be as a wall around Zion in this the day of God's displeasure against us for our gross ingratitude! Oh Lord! what an unhappy state of things there will be hereafter, if already such confusion exists even before the work of reformation is scarcely begun!"

Luther looked attentively at Jonas while he was speaking, and with every word his eye acquired more brilliancy. "The Heavenly Prophets* give me work enough to do.

* A fanatical faction at the time of the Reformation was thus designated.

This faction has become so fruitful, that in one year it has got five or six heads. The first is Carlstadt, who teaches that when Christ says, '*This is my body,*' he did not allude to the bread, but to his own body; and this I regard as a desecration of the sacrament."

"And whom do you call the second head of this sect?" asked the physician.

"The other," continued Luther, earnestly, "is Zwingli, with his perversion of the text. He changes the *substance* and *appearance*, and perverts the word *is* to *signifies*; thus he says, we should read it, '*This signifies my body,*' instead of what Christ himself says, '*This is my body.*' The third is John Œcolampadius, who holds that we should read it thus:—'*This is the figure of my body;*' and thus, in various ways, the others falsify the text."

"From the beginning, all heretics have tried to help themselves out by the Scriptures," said Melanchthon.

"That is Satan's trick," continued Luther; "at first the Bible among Christians, was an emperor, to whose directions all submissively bowed; but now Satan has made it a book of heresies, and I compare it to a torn net, in which every one has made a hole. The simpletons! What do they mean by their quarrels with the word of God and God's cause, which they do not understand! Now they are assailing the Lord's Supper; but you will live to see them proceeding further, and attacking baptism, and original sin, and even Christ himself."

"May God preserve us from all that," said Jonas. "We will reprove, rebuke, and exhort, until they are convinced of their fanaticism."

Luther earnestly shook his head, and replied, "Where God does not restrain and help, all our doings and counsels are nothing."

"But you must not forget, dear Doctor," observed the physician, "that your own writings have gone out in all directions, and are read by thousands with great eagerness and benefit."

"Of what avail are my writings?" asked Luther. "The fanatics and Sacramentarians despise me, and do not consider me worthy of a serious reply. It is enough for them to look at my books with a sneer, and say, 'There's no spirit or talent in them.'"

"But still you must again rise up against them," said Melancthon, "and if not on your own account, yet for the sake of the simple and weak."

"That alone will drive me to it," replied Luther; "for I have no hope of seeing the teachers and writers converted from their heresy or fanaticism. No one ever heard of the originator of a false doctrine being converted. The old prophets, and the apostles, and all the holy doctors of former times, have never converted the author of a heresy; and it was not because their errors have not been properly assailed and refuted; for that has been done a thousand times; but their heart is full of vanity and presumption. They look at truth through a painted glass, and always see it in the same color. The glass must first be removed, or the truth will have no effect, and God alone can do that. But that," continued he, more earnestly, "shall not deter me from presenting the truth to their view, distinctly and boldly. If I do not succeed in converting the fanatical leaders, yet I will take away from them some of their *followers*, and strengthen the weak in preserving them from the poison of error; and if I do not succeed even in that, yet I will testify before God and the whole world, that I never have had or will have anything in common

with these heretics, and will wash my hands of the blood of the souls which they betray and murder with their poison."

"They will not acknowledge," said Melanchthon, interrupting him, "that they are the enemies of God and of His word; they claim the credit of prizing the Scriptures highly, and appeal to their writings and teaching for proof; on this subject of the Sacrament alone they do not harmonize."

"Dear Philip," replied Luther, vehemently, "God's word is God's word! He who charges God with falsehood in *one* word, or regards it as of small importance that he is thus charged, blasphemes the whole Deity, and loses all reverence for Him. There is *one* God who will not be divided, or suffer himself to be praised at one place and dishonored at another. We must either believe *all* God's words or *none*."

The subject was continued by the various persons present; and during the conversation, Luther again showed himself to be the same bold warrior of Christ as of old—every trace of melancholy had vanished, and his eyes glistened as though illuminated with heavenly fire. The physician looked on him with amazement, for being able to exercise such control over his severe bodily sufferings; and he was anxious that this mental preponderance should be maintained. "As a layman," he at length remarked, "I am not yet familiar with this controversy."

"The matter is this," quickly replied Melanchthon, before Luther could answer, "it is a question about the words of Christ in the Lord's Supper, '*This is my body.*' Zuingli, and those like him, say, that the little word *is* means *represents*; and Œcolampadius maintains that the

words, '*My body*,' mean the *sign* or *figure* of my body. Hence, according to Zuingli, our Lord would say, 'Take, eat, this bread *represents* my *body*;' but, according to Œcolampadius, the Lord would say, 'Take, eat, this bread is the *sign* of my *body*.' "

"And we believe," said Luther, quickly, when Melancthon had ceased, "we believe and teach that, in the Lord's Supper, we partake of the body of Christ really and truly. But *how* that is, or *how* he is in the bread, we do not know, and never shall know. But we should believe God's word, and not prescribe measure and ways to Him. *We see bread with our eyes, but we hear with our ears that the body is there.*"

"What is the difference between the interpretation of Zuingli and Œcolampadius?" asked Schurff.

"None that I can see," said Luther. "Their language differs, but they agree in sentiment. For when Zuingli says, 'This represents my body,' it is the same with Œcolampadius, who says, 'This is the sign of my body.' It is all the same whether I say, laughing *represents* joy, or laughing *is a sign* of joy. I ask nothing more than that Zuingli should show, *from the Scriptures*, that the little word *is* means *represents*; and that Œcolampadius should prove that the word *body* means the *sign* of the body. If they cannot do that, then the words, '*This is my body*,' stand firm as a rock."

"And this rock will stand to eternity," exclaimed Jonas.

"Amen!" responded Luther; and continued. "There are others who would be yet wiser than both these two, and torture the text thus: 'My body given for you is *this*.' Others pervert them thus: 'Take and eat; that which is given for you is my body.' And again, others have it thus:

‘Take, eat, this is the commemoration of my body, which is given for you.’ To this six-headed faction another is added, which says, ‘This is no article of faith, and hence we should not contend about it, but let every one believe what he pleases.’ These disregard it too shamefully.”

Luther’s excitement had evidently been of service to him, and he felt much relieved. “Come,” said he, “let us take a walk into the garden. Will not the fresh air do me good, Doctor Augustin?”

“Yes, certainly, if you desire it,” replied the physician.

The company followed Luther down stairs towards the garden.

They had scarcely seated themselves under the apple-tree, where Luther, as a monk, years before, had struggled through many a severe conflict with Satan, than Bugenhagen entered and joined the company.

The conversation on the Lord’s Supper was immediately resumed, and during the interview Luther uttered many of the remarkable sayings and striking arguments which were afterwards committed to writing and published. He displayed all the energy of his better years; his eye flashed; his voice was sonorous; his mind vigorous and clear; his action excited; and no one would have suspected that this was the poor invalid, who, an hour before, was apprehensive of immediate death, and who, for a week before, had suffered unspeakable pain of body and apprehension of mind.

After he had concluded his argument in favor of his views of the Lord’s Supper, in which he displayed extraordinary eloquence of speech and force of logic, the physician grasped his hands and exclaimed:

“Thanks! a thousand thanks, venerable Sir, for these words! Oh! if I could only tell you how they quicken

my soul, and what expanded views of the divine character they give me! Now, I see more distinctly than ever, how death has no more sting for the Christian, and how wonderfully gracious the Lord has been to us poor sinners."

Melanchthon also threw a grateful glance on his powerful fellow-combatant; and although he said not a word, yet deep emotion of heart was visible on his expressive face. Bugenhagen and Jonas sat silent, with bowed heads. They shared in the excitement of the physician. A pause ensued. Luther gave evidence now of complete exhaustion. He rose, and said, "Let us take a turn or two in the garden; there is a refreshing breeze; and after that, each one will retire to his chamber."

"One more request, dear Doctor, I wish to make," said Melanchthon. "That which you have spoken to us to-day, you must indeed proclaim from the house-tops, and write a book against the Sacramentarians."

"Certainly there is need of it," replied Luther, "much as I fear that my infirmities will often interfere with the work. But it shall and must be done." He then turned to the physician, and observed: "Dear Doctor Augustin, I have felt like a new-born child during the time you have been here. But I know well it will not endure long. I have not slept an hour for the past week."

"And yet has the Lord hitherto preserved you," replied Schurff.

"That is language which moves the heart," said Luther, and extended his hand to the physician. "You are right. How can I preach to others, if I myself am a castaway? God will not abandon me, a poor worm."

And here he took leave of his friends, and retired to his chamber.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIRST MEETING.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. — Ps. li. 17.

THE evening was serene in Wittenberg, and a refreshing breeze prevailed after the intense heat of the day. The moon, pursuing her silent course up the dark, blue sky, and pouring a flood of light upon the city, invited the inhabitants to long and late promenades.

Behind Kranach's house there was a small garden, half enclosed by a green hedge fence, from which a gate opened on the great public square. Against one side of the house there was constructed an arbor of blooming jasmines, whose fragrant odor pervaded the whole garden. Grati-
fying as all this was to every innocent and contented mind, yet it was, for the most part, lost to *one* mind, which was usually not excelled by any other in innocence and contentment.

We allude to blind Margaret, who was seated in the arbor by the side of little Ursula, Kranach's eldest daughter. They were engaged in earnest religious conversation, when, after a lapse of some time, the servant came to conduct the child to bed. She retired unwillingly,

for she was always delighted with the instructive conversation of her blind friend. After they had proceeded some steps towards the door of the house, the servant turned and asked, "Shall I come back immediately and lead you in, Miss Margaret?"

"No," she replied, "I can find the way back myself. But if Mr. or Mrs. Kranach enquires after me, or seems to be unwilling that I remain here alone, come and tell me."

Thus, she was alone in the arbor; the moon's pale light shone all around her, although she was enshrouded in darkness.

"How happy I feel to-day!" said she, to herself. "Even the regret that I have usually felt; the displeasure of my father and sister; my expulsion from home; the severe reproaches on account of my misfortune; the sympathy from others for my blindness, which always pains me, although it should please me, all, all appear so light to-day, and are swallowed up in peace and joy in God. And why do so few understand what makes me so happy? Have I a different heart from theirs? Am I a child, with childish views of things, at which they are compelled to laugh? Ah, Lord! if, as I grow older, my heart must change, and I must lose these delightful feelings, then let me always be a child; or let me, as a child, enter Thy heavenly kingdom."

She here relapsed into profound meditation, and her head was bowed on her breast.

She was presently aroused from her reverie by the sound of approaching footsteps, from a direction opposite to that from the house. She sprang up, alarmed, from her seat, and extending her head, she listened intently,

and awaited the result of this unusual interruption. But all was again silent.

"What can that be?" said she, to herself. "It is not a bird that has sought a resting-place in the shrubbery of the garden; it is too heavy for the footsteps of an animal; it must be a human being! Mr. Kranach, is it you?" she asked, with trembling voice; "or you, Mrs. Kranach? or —"

She was about to mention another name, but it did not escape her lips.

As no answer was given to her questions, her alarm increased, and she began to feel her way back to the house. Just at that time she heard a sound similar to a profound, but suppressed human sigh, issuing from the vicinity of the garden hedge, and this excited painful emotions in the heart of Margaret.

"That is the voice of some unfortunate one!" said she, and stood still. And this conviction not only dispelled her fear, but gave her courage to render all the assistance in her power.

"Who are you?" she exclaimed. "Answer me, I beseech you. I am blind, and know not who or where you are, but I can go into the house and procure help! O, answer me, and do not refuse the aid of a poor girl."

And still there was no answer. "Now," said she, "help must be needed." And she resumed her slow walk to the house. Just then the voice of distress was renewed, and with greater distinctness than before.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the blind girl. "I know that voice! Catharine, sister, it is you! For our sainted mother's sake, answer me, dear sister! I recognize your voice; do not deny me; you know I cannot go to you; oh, sister! come, come to me."

But all her entreaties were fruitless, and she became doubtful whether she had rightly distinguished the voice. She knew not what else to do than to resume her return to the house. She had taken but a few steps, when she heard the distinct words, "Wait, I'm coming!"

"And it is you, dear, good Catharine!" now exclaimed Margaret, with a joyful heart. "Come into the arbor; I shall try to find my way back to it, if you do not come and lead me. I will follow you wherever you shall lead me."

Whilst she was, with difficulty, feeling her way back to the arbor again, she heard the footsteps advancing nearer, but still with considerable hesitation. But suddenly she felt herself grasped by the feet, and prevented from proceeding further; a head leaned against her knees, and a voice, interrupted by sobs, exclaimed, "Margaret, can you forgive me?"

But Margaret did not reply; she inclined herself downwards, and, with warm affection, grasped her sister at both arms, raised her up from her kneeling posture, and then fell upon her bosom. "Mother!" she exclaimed, with streaming tears; "mother, do you not rejoice in Heaven that your daughters here on earth love each other so tenderly? Oh! Catharine, I have always loved you, though you would not believe it. How is our poor, poor father?"

"Do not speak of him now!" replied Catharine, amid almost audible agitation of heart. "Speak of me, Margaret, speak with me! tell me first that you have forgiven me!"

"That I cannot do! there is no necessity for it!" replied Margaret, with emotion. "I have never accused

you. I knew that I was not worthy of your love, and when this distressed me, it was only a complaint against myself. I did not understand the art of gaining your affections."

"Oh! do not employ such language," begged Catharine. "Formerly it was agreeable to me, but now it is painful. I know that I have despised you; I have not regarded you as my dear sister, but as a low servant."

"And why did you do that?" asked Margaret, with sincere sympathy.

"Ah! I scarcely know myself," she replied. "As far back as I can remember, it has always been so. You were always the servant and I the mistress, and you bore everything so silently—you did not wish it otherwise—and were always so happy and contented. Ah! Margaret, if our sainted mother had not died so early, it never would have gone so far. I believe that even sisterly love is a thing to be taught."

"Yes, through genuine love of God," said Margaret, and then continued, "This is one thing, dear sister, that always saddened me. You never would learn to love God cordially. Do you feel, Catharine, that it was God alone who has conducted you to me?"

"I do not yet understand you," she answered. "It may be so, but I do not understand it. But I can no longer conceal it from you!" she continued, after a pause, and with renewed agitation. "There is one, certainly, who has conducted me to you, and he is the young Italian. Margaret, Leonard was the first who ever spoke an unkind word to me. I hated him bitterly on this account, and hated you more than before, because I saw that he loved you more than me."

"I do not know what he has spoken to you," said Margaret; "but do you think that he designed to do you wrong?"

"I thought so until yesterday," she replied. "But yesterday, as I was bringing food to our poor father, he entered the house; he looked at me with evident sympathy and kind feeling, and said, 'Catharine, have you ever heard of one who opens the eyes of the blind, and makes the dumb speak?' These words penetrated my heart. I knew that he alluded to you and to our poor father, who has not yet uttered a word; and yet it seemed to me that he included me also, and intimated that, with seeing eyes, I am yet blind, and that I should go and speak to you."

"And then you also thought of God?" asked Margaret, almost impatient with joy.

"Oh, no, no," said she, "I thought only of you, sister; I felt conscious now that, during my whole life, I had treated you unkindly, and that I alone am to blame for your dismissal from the house by father. I had no rest, and wept the whole night, and every word that Leonard spoke at that time, fell like melted lead on my heart. I thought of nothing but of you. You stood before me with your blind eyes, and they were of a sudden opened, as Leonard said, and your first glance fell on me, and that look was like a sword, which divided my soul. It is that which has tormented me all this day. I have risen at least ten times to hasten to you and fall at your feet, for I had heard where you were. But fear always drove me back again until evening. Then it seemed to me as if I heard a voice, saying, 'The blind one who is to receive her sight is sister Margaret, but the dumb one who will not speak, that is you, yourself!' and now the spirit of fear drove

me out of the house. I was no longer afraid of you, but of Leonard. I threw myself on my knees, and begged the mother of God, and all the saints, that I might not meet him before I had seen you. I could not endure his look. Then I came here and walked around the house like a thief, and had not the courage to enter, until I advanced towards the garden and heard your voice. Oh, Margaret, if you forgive me, Leonard will also forgive me."

"Catharine," responded Margaret, sorrowfully, "suppose I grant that you have done me and Leonard wrong, is there not a third one whom you have injured, and who alone can forgive?"

"Oh! do not rob me of my comfort!" begged Catharine. "I know you mean holy mother Church, but tomorrow I am going to confession, and shall do penance, and shall fast a week, yea, two weeks, and give alms to the hospital. I shall do that, and much more still, but do not deprive me of my comfort; I think only of you and Leonard. Yes, dear sister, the dumb must now speak; I must tell you everything. I know Leonard loves you more than me, and I will love him no more, and tell him to bestow all his affections on you. Is that agreeable to you, dear Margaret? or shall I do more penance? Margaret, tell me, shall I go into a convent? I would, indeed, weep day and night, but if you and Leonard desire it, I will certainly go."

As Catharine here was completely exhausted, and had bedewed Margaret's hand with her tears, the latter, in a tone of deepest sympathy, said, "My dear sister, dismiss such thoughts from your mind; and, believe me, you are consoling yourself with false principles. How shall I begin to move your heart? Catharine, you have said that

Leonard meant you when he spoke of *the dumb*, but how would it be, if, when he spoke of the *seeing eye* of the blind, he did not mean me, but *you only*?"

"No, no!" she replied, suddenly, and earnestly, "he meant us both, you and me!"

"Poor sister," continued Margaret, "can you really hope that my sight shall yet be restored? I know that my lot on earth is perpetual blindness, until in the night of death, and the grave, light shall arise, and I shall see everything that was concealed in darkness. And it is this which comforts and supports me, and makes me contented and happy. Yes, Catharine, with my bodily eyes I shall never see you, but my soul sees you and the tears in your eyes. You think," she continued, in an impressive tone, "that Leonard's words respecting the dumb person speaking are fulfilled when you speak to me, but, sister, are you not uttering merely what your heart dictates? Would you not have spoken thus before this, if your heart had inclined you to it, as to-day?"

"Yes," replied Catharine. "But *why* did I not speak? *why could* I not speak? *he*, he had not yet wounded my heart with the arrow of his word; he had not yet tortured me with fear and anguish."

"He?" asked Margaret, and shook her head in deepest sadness. "Ah, Catharine, would that you meant Him, the only One, who alone can wound with the arrow of His word, and heal; who does not impart fear and anguish, but, on the other hand, takes it away! Leonard's language has roused your feelings, but do you think that this poor, strange young man spoke this of his own dictation? tell me, Catharine, do you believe that Leonard is as happy and contented as I?"

"Yes!" she replied again; "you are both happier than I am, for you love each other, but I am despised by everybody! Everything that he says of you, and for you, gives evidence of his affection for you; only for me he has no kind word."

"Sister," said Margaret, in a sorrowful tone; "the only reason why your heart and conscience are ill at ease and perverted is, that you do not know *Him* who alone opens the eyes of the blind, and makes the dumb speak. Ah! if you could only understand this word, that the Lord chastens those whom he loves! But my comfort and hope are, that you will learn to see and speak because you believe. Let us often speak to each other of *this One*. Not to-day, but to-morrow and every day. Your mind is at present too much occupied with other things. But, believe me, Catharine, everything will yet go right, and we shall have sweet enjoyment!"

"Yes," said the sister, thoughtfully: "I know what you mean; you intend that he should transfer his love to me, and that you will disclaim it for yourself. Yes, you can do that; you have always done it. But I dare not look for such happiness; I dare not accept it of you. And then, again," she added, with a profound sigh, "he would not give you up, for you are better than I."

When Margaret heard these words, tears filled her eyes. She could not reply, but drew her sister to her heart and embraced her.

"Do you weep?" enquired Catharine. "Yes, it will be hard for you to give your poor sister the best and most valuable thing you have."

"No!" she replied; "I am not weeping for myself, but for you, Catharine, because your mind is yet dark,

and you will not employ the only true remedy for a wounded spirit. But your time has not yet come, and the natural man comprehends nothing of the Spirit of God. Now, retire to rest, dear sister: it must already be late."

"I will not go without you!" she replied. "You must go with me, Margaret."

"This evening, yet?" asked she, astonished.

"Yes, this evening, and immediately," continued Catharine, in an animated voice. "You must not stay here any longer. If you do not go with me, I shall think that you have not forgiven me."

"Sister," replied Margaret, in a solemn tone, and lifting both hands towards Heaven, "as sure as I believe in the Lord my God, so sure is it that I love you with all my heart."

"Then show it!" besought Catharine, earnestly. "Go with me! Will you not aid me in nursing our father?"

"Cheerfully, cheerfully!" said Margaret. "But do you not know that I have been cast off by him? dare I cross the threshold if he does not remove the curse which he has pronounced?"

"He did that when he was angry!" said the sister. "He has forgotten that, and at my request he will recall the word?"

Margaret now reached for the hand of her sister, and said, with earnestness and dignity: "Catharine, I am compelled to run the risk of exciting your doubt of my affection for you, but I cannot, I dare not go with you. If you had been sent by our father, and if he had called me for the purpose of repeating his curse, yea, even of chastising me more severely with his own hand, I would

follow you. But, for the sake of your own peace, Catharine, yes, for the sake of the salvation of an unhappy father, I dare not now go with you. I must wait the Lord's time. Go, now, dear sister, go in peace. Let our souls meet in prayer, and, believe me, there is no sacrifice on earth which I would not cheerfully make for your good."

Catharine reluctantly yielded to the wish of her sister, but she was so deeply convinced of her sincerity and kindness, that she made no further opposition. She silently extended her hand to her blind sister, and then returned through the garden gate to her father's house.

Margaret laid her folded hands over her bosom, and said, "Lord, thou Searcher of hearts, who leadest Thy children in the right way, conduct Thou the blind in the way they should go!" And then she repaired to her chamber for the night.

CHAPTER XIV.

LUTHER'S DESPONDENCY.

Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved. — Ps. lxxx. 3.

THE mysterious disease which for several weeks had assailed Luther, both physically and mentally, and which often overwhelmed him with dreadful apprehensions, was occasionally mitigated for a few hours by the exertion of his own iron will. His friends and fellow-laborers, under the direction of the physician, did all in their power to render him comfortable, and to dispel his deep-settled melancholy by kind attentions, cheerful conversation, and especially by fostering his zeal in the cause of the Lord; but all their efforts were often in vain. As soon as Luther was alone, or when he was exhausted by any effort whatever, and sought the needed quiet and rest, he was subject to severer attacks than before; and his mental sufferings were almost insupportable.

For a fortnight he had enjoyed scarcely one hour's refreshing sleep; he ate and drank so little, that it is mysterious how he could sustain life. His cheeks were wan and sunken; his eye was languid and dull; his whole countenance betrayed the deepest despondency. Frequently, when the roaring in his ears, to which he was

subject, became so violent, he would suddenly start up as if making an effort to escape some falling rock; but he would not proceed three steps before the vertigo would attack him so severely as to compel him to throw himself back on the chair.

Doctor Augustin Schurff did everything which medical science offered in that day, to relieve him; and Luther objected to nothing; but the disease baffled all remedies, and filled poor Catharine Luther with the most painful anxiety.

It was on the morning of Saturday, the 6th of July, that John Bugenhagen, the parish minister of Wittenberg, was sitting at his study-table, preparing his sermon for the morrow. The clock of the monastery had just struck eight, when a hasty knock at his door roused him from his meditation, and before he had time to look round, or say, "Come in," the door opened.

Wolff, the old and faithful servant of Luther, entered the room without salutation, and besought the minister to hasten to the monastery and see Doctor Martin.

"Did you say in a hurry?" exclaimed Bugenhagen, alarmed. "What has happened? Who has sent you here?"

"The Doctor himself!" replied Wolff; and then added, in a desponding tone, "May God avert all danger; but it seems to me as if it were going to turn out badly; and poor Madam Catharine is frightened almost to death, especially when awhile ago the Doctor uttered such wonderful things, just like one possessed of an evil spirit; and she begs you to come immediately, and to see her before you speak with the Doctor."

Before Wolff had finished his message, Bugenhagen was

ready to go. He soon arrived at the monastery, and first entered the room occupied by Catharine.

He was much astonished to see Luther himself standing by his wife, as in ordinary conversation. Even a sharp, penetrating look, revealed nothing unusual in Luther's countenance or manner; but Catharine betrayed the most painful anxiety.

Luther advanced a few steps towards his friend, and, extending his hand, said, "I thank you, dear Doctor, that you have so soon complied with my request."

"How could I do otherwise?" responded Bugenhagen. "But, may I ask why you have sent for me?"

"With no evil design!" said Luther, with a forced smile. "I need your services, and have much to say to you. Come, go with me into my own chamber."

And before Bugenhagen could answer, Luther advanced towards his wife, kissed her, and said, "Do not be alarmed, dear Katy. The hand of the Lord can change all things, and will you cheerfully forgive me for all the wrong I have done you?"

Her deep emotion would not allow her to speak; but, weeping, she fell on the bosom of her husband. Luther gently disengaged himself; and with hurried, though tottering steps, left the room. Bugenhagen was about to follow, but the afflicted woman, with a significant wink, requested him to delay.

"I will tell you alone, venerable Sir, what has happened," she began, with a trembling voice. "About an hour ago, my dear husband had a more violent and terrible mental attack than ever; so that I really thought it was all over with him. When he had become somewhat composed again, he told me that he could not endure another

such attack ; and that, if it came, the Lord would surely thereby call him to Himself."

"I trust not so soon !" replied Bugenhagen. "But it is unaccountable to me that your dear husband is just now as cheerful and composed as though nothing ailed him !"

"Oh, you know very well," said she, "how calmly he can commend everything to God, and resign himself wholly to the divine control. He never makes known his sorrows to those who cannot help him, or to whom his complaints would be of no avail."

"That is true !" added Bugenhagen. "Your husband is a very extraordinary man in all respects. But allow me to follow him and serve him as I can."

Bugenhagen departed, and entered the well-known chamber. He found the sick man absorbed in profound meditation, as if in prayer ; so that he did not observe the entrance of his friend.

The painted glass of the windows threw a mild, almost mysterious light on Luther, whose eyes were intently fixed on a beautifully carved ivory crucifix, suspended against the wall. The portraits of Melancthon and the Elector of Saxony, painted by Kranach, seemed as silent witnesses of his sincere devotion.

His flute and lute, which hung near the door, and which so often had restored cheerfulness to his depressed heart, had lost their magic charms for that day. All would not avail to dispel the gloom that settled on his mind ; and this convinced Bugenhagen that an unusually heavy load was pressing down the heart of Luther.

Strongly as he felt inclined to speak with the sick man, yet he did not venture to disturb his devotions, but remained standing at a respectful distance until Luther

should notice him. Gradually his language became distinct, and he was heard to recite the consoling words of the Saviour, "Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe in God; believe also in me;" and then he continued in fervent prayer for himself, family, friends, and the church.

He now turned towards Bugenhagen, and begged him to be seated; and when he had done this, Luther threw himself into a chair in a state of perfect physical exhaustion, and commenced the conversation. It was continued for some time, during which Luther devoutly confessed his sins; and the minister, in accordance with the custom of the times, pronounced the absolution.

The conversation was continued for several hours, during which Luther enlarged on the state of his mind, and laid it bare before his friend. All his secret sorrows, his fierce temptations, his annoying fears, his mental struggles, were unreservedly pourtrayed. Bugenhagen attempted to comfort him by the promises of the gospel, the examples of the suffering saints of every age, the forbearance of God, and by every other argument which his own rich experience and extensive knowledge suggested.

At length, said Luther, "Ah! you cannot conceive how heavy the hand of God lies on me. The attack which I suffered this morning filled me with such horrible fear and trembling, that I could not describe it if I would; and it is now several weeks since I am bearing this cross; so that I can truly say with my dear St. Paul, '*I die daily.*'"

"And how often," replied Bugenhagen, "how often have we seen you in the most cheerful frame of mind during this very time!"

"Yes, my brother!" continued Luther, with a melancholy smile, "many persons think that because I am some-

times outwardly cheerful, I am always walking in a path strewn with flowers. But heaven knows how wretched my life is. I have often resolved to conduct myself more gravely before men, but God has not given me the ability."

"Will you not bless and praise God that He has given you a cheerful heart?" asked Bugenhagen. "Does not Solomon say, 'A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance; but by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken?'"

"And yet we may carry our cheerfulness too far," said Luther. "Thank God, the world cannot charge me with any vice, although it takes offence at me; and I pray earnestly every day that God will give me grace so to conduct myself, that my sins may not be the occasion of stumbling to others."

When Luther here ceased, he rose and walked to and fro for a few moments. The monastery clock struck ten.

"Do you remember," said Bugenhagen, "that several noblemen have invited you and me, and Doctor Jonas, to dinner to-day?"

"Yes," he replied, "but I have no inclination to eat or drink. You and Jonas go, and convey my excuse."

"But what are we without you?" said Bugenhagen. "I do trust you will be able to go, for the sake of those who expect to meet you there."

"No, no, dear brother!" replied Luther. "I would rather remain here, and give myself up entirely to the will of my God. Go and salute all of my good friends."

When Bugenhagen saw that he could not accomplish his purpose, he left his deeply-depressed friend alone in his chamber. As in leaving, he passed the room of Catharine, she stepped out and enquired into the physical and mental condition of her husband, and thanked heaven that the

report was more favorable than she had reason to expect.

“But let me ask one thing of you,” added Bugenhagen. “You know that we are invited to dine at the Black Eagle with several noblemen to-day; but your husband does not wish to go. Now, use all your influence to persuade him to go. Cheerful company will be of service to him. It will dispel the spirit of melancholy!”

Catharine promised to do all she could, and Bugenhagen returned to his home.

CHAPTER XV.

LUTHER DYING, YET HOPING.

A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench. — ISAIAH xlii. 3.

MADAM CATHARINE finally succeeded in persuading her husband to accept of the invitation to dinner at the Black Eagle. He went reluctantly, and only that he might not appear too unyielding to her urgent solicitation, but with very little hope of dispelling his mental gloom by social conversation. Baron Wildenfels and the Honorable Hans Loeser had jointly invited him as a special mark of their exalted regard; but Bugenhagen and Justus Jonas were also expected on the occasion.

Luther was pre-eminently qualified for social intercourse. His conversational powers were of the highest

grade, — his wit, his inexhaustible fund of anecdote, his smart repartee and unfailing flow of spirits, rendered him a most agreeable companion. And yet all these were exerted in behalf of the great cause to which he had devoted his life. With all his sparkling wit, he always restrained himself and his associates within the bounds of moral propriety and Christian uprightness. Every person was as much edified by his humor as they were instructed, alarmed, reproved and confuted, by his more serious discourses and writings. Hence his society was always coveted by all classes of men, for all felt themselves benefited by his rich and varied conversation. Perhaps no man ever lived who exercised more control over others by his presence and conversation than Luther. And this power is the more to be wondered at when we know that it always involved a conquest over his own mental and physical sufferings, especially in his later years, and enabled him to appear cheerful to his companions, when at the same time his heart was overwhelmed with grief.

The dinner, which at that time was taken at eleven o'clock, was, at least for Luther, finished long before twelve. He had eaten but little, and, to the deep regret of the other guests, he rose from the table earlier than usual. Bugenhagen and Jonas left the hotel at the same time with him; the former to finish his sermon for tomorrow, and the latter to escort Luther home.

"I think," said he to Jonas, "that a little fresh air would do me good. I still feel the effects of the terrible attack of this morning in all my limbs."

They entered the garden, and then continued Luther, "If it please God, I will leave all my trouble and sorrow here."

They sat there two hours, and spoke of the conflicts and trials which now harassed him. More cheerful than before, he rose in order to proceed into the house.

"Do me and Katy the pleasure of taking supper with us this evening, and bring your wife with you," said he to Jonas.

Thus these two men separated, and did not anticipate that when they met again, it would be under alarming circumstances. When, at five o'clock, which was the usual supper-hour, Jonas and his wife entered the monastery, they were received by Catharine with a deeply-distressed countenance. "My dear husband," said she, "has just laid down to obtain a little repose; he came home extremely feeble."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Jonas. "How sudden these changes are! He was so cheerful when we parted to-day. It is not proper then for us to remain."

"Certainly!" said Catharine. "My dear husband expects you, and requests you to excuse him for a short time. He will be ready to see you presently."

Jonas remained, and before long he had the pleasure of seeing Luther enter the room. His appearance was not changed, but he complained of an unusually severe and distressing ringing in his left ear. He took his seat at the supper-table, but soon rose and said, "You must indeed excuse me; I am too weak to remain any longer; I will go into my chamber and lie down."

With tottering steps he left the room. His wife was about to follow him, but hastened first to give some necessary directions to the domestics; and thus it was that Jonas alone went with Luther into his chamber. He had scarcely entered it when he suddenly changed color; with

both hands he reached round as though to support himself; and, before Jonas could extend any help, he fell insensible on the floor.

“Jonas!”—he yet cried to his friend with trembling voice,—“Jonas! I am deathly sick! water—or anything—water, or I shall die!” His voice failed. His hands and face became white and cold as death. He lay motionless, lifeless as a corpse. In his alarm, Jonas grasped a pitcher of water from the table, and dashed all its contents into his face and bosom.

Gradually, a faint tint of blood-color returned to his death-pale cheeks; but his eyes remained closed, and his body was extended like that of a dead man, whilst his hands lay motionless at his side. He then opened his lips, and in a low, broken tone, said, “O my God! if this is the hour Thou hast determined for my departure, Thy will be done!”

With great difficulty he opened his eyes, and, lifting them up, he, with deepest devotion, recited his favorite Lord’s Prayer; and then continued, in the language of the sixth Psalm, “O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed; my soul is also sore vexed; but then, O Lord, how long? Return, O Lord, deliver my soul. O save me for thy mercy’s sake; for in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks? I am weary with my groaning. Mine eye is consumed because of grief!”

And then a cheerful smile spread over his pale, sunken face, and he raised his cold hands and said, “Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord has heard the

voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication. The Lord will receive my prayer. Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed; let them return and be ashamed suddenly."

His wife now entered the chamber; when she saw him lying, like a dead man, on the floor, she uttered an agonizing cry, and called to the domestics immediately to summon Bugenhagen and the physician. She then threw herself, weeping, on the sick man, and besought him to suffer himself to be conveyed to bed. He was lifted by Jonas and herself, who, with difficulty, conducted him to his couch. She was almost beside herself, and knew not what course to take. After a moment's reflection, she seized a towel that was hanging at the door-post, tore it off, dipped it in water, and with it bathed her husband's face. "Do not die, dear husband!" she exclaimed, in bitter agony. "What a poor, wretched woman I shall be without you! O, pity me! speak but one consoling word. Do you not feel better, dear husband?"

"I am very weak," he replied, in a feeble voice. "I have lost all strength. I am like a dead man."

He then prayed, "Lord, my God! how cheerfully I would have shed my blood for the sake of Thy gospel, Thou knowest! but, perhaps, I am not worthy of it! Thy will be done! If Thou wilt have it so, I will cheerfully die, only grant that Thy holy name may be honored, whether I live or die. But, if it were possible, I should be pleased to live a little longer for Thine elect's sake. But, if the time has come, do as it seems proper to Thee, for Thou art the Lord of life and death."

In the mean time, Jonas and his wife, who had also come in, aided Catharine in the application of all restora-

tive means, by washing, friction and cooling drinks. But all seemed to be of no avail; his limbs continued stiff and cold, only his eyes became a little more bright. But he was less concerned about himself than about the sacred cause which he had hitherto served. He did not seem to know, or did not wish to know that he was sick; it was no concern to him whether he lived or died; whether he was in danger or not. Whilst those around him were anxiously solicitous about his recovery, he was engaged with God and His word; his whole heart was occupied with prayer, even when he did open his lips.

After he had thus looked upward for a few moments in silent supplication, he again prayed audibly, one while in German, and then in Latin.

At length Dr. Augustine Schurff entered the room, and at the same time came the parish minister, Bugenhagen. Schurff soon discovered what was necessary to be done, and ordered the frequent application of hot cloths to his breast, stomach and feet. The two women and the domestics were industriously engaged in this service, and, after a few minutes, there were evident symptoms of a reaction in his system. "Be of good cheer, dear Doctor," said Schurff; "please God, you will soon be better."

"If the Lord restore me," replied Luther, calmly, "it will not be for my sake, but for yours. Oh! dear friends, and you, my beloved Katy, pray diligently for me! The Lord is pleased with intercessions for poor sinners."

"That we shall do," said Bugenhagen; "but do you also pray God that He may not take you, the faithful servant of His word, from us, but that you may continue long with us, to be a consolation to us and many other poor sinners."

Luther smiled, and said, "For myself, death would be gain, but it would be well for others for me to remain longer in the flesh. Dear Heavenly Father, I know not what I shall pray for. *Thy* will be done. But what gratifies me, my dear Pastor, is, that I, this morning, confessed my sins, and that you pronounced the absolution."

"Then you hope that you will not die?" asked Bugenhagen.

"I do not know as yet," rejoined Luther. "Why should not my hour have come? And because the world delights in falsehood, many will say that I have recanted my doctrine before my death. I, therefore, most earnestly desire that you both, Doctor Jonas and Doctor Bugenhagen, should be witnesses of my confession of faith. I declare with a good conscience that I have taught God's word correctly, agreeably to His command, to which God himself has compelled me without my will. I declare to you that I have taught, correctly and profitably, the subjects of faith, love, experience, the sacraments and other articles of Christian doctrine."

"The Lord knows that this is, indeed, consoling," said Jonas. "You have only done and taught what the Lord has taught you in His word by His Holy Spirit."

"But many," he added, "blame me for being too severe and violent, when I wrote against Papists, Factionists and Sacramentarians, and rebuked their false doctrine and hypocrisy. It is true, I have been sometimes severe, but I have never regretted it. But whether I have been violent or moderate, I have never sought their injury, much less their souls' harm, but, on the other hand, I have aimed at the good and the salvation of my enemies."

His voice now again failed, and tears filled his eyes.

He wept not for himself, but for the enemies of the Gospel.

“Alas!” he continued, in a suppressed tone, “how many sects and factions have arisen, who falsify and pervert God’s word, and lead astray His flock which He has purchased with His blood! I cannot often enough humbly confess that God has endowed me, though unworthy, with fine talents, which He has denied to thousands of others, and which I would still longer employ to His glory, and for the benefit of His people, if it were His will. I had resolved to write on the subject of Baptism, but, perhaps, God does not desire it, for, according to appearances, He has determined something else in regard to me. What confusion will not the Sacramentarians, the Anabaptists and other factionists create after my death! But I comfort myself with the reflection, that Christ is stronger than Satan; yea, He is the Lord.”

These last words Luther spoke in a tone becoming still weaker, whilst copious tears coursed down his cheeks; now he became altogether incapable of speech; his face and hands grew pale as death; the muscles of his face contracted; the whole body was cold; and the eyes were fast closed. The physician now applied the former remedy with double energy. Cloths, pillows, blankets, with everything of the kind that could be brought together in a hurry, were warmed at the fire, and were laid on his breast and feet.

And although he had the appearance of a dead man, yet his mind seemed to be unaffected with the infirmity. He still spoke and prayed most earnestly, giving himself up wholly to the will of God.

The men and women who stood by the bed-side took up

the words of his prayer into their distressed hearts, and employed them as intercessions with God. Catharine was all the time indefatigably employed in rubbing the breast of her husband with a warm cloth; but the icy coldness would not yield, and his whole countenance had the appearance of a death-mask, with its hollow eyes and sunken features, a true picture of distress, and an alarming monition of the frailty and perishableness of the human body.

He now folded his hands and said, "My God and Father, if I have sometimes been too cheerful in conversation, or not sufficiently guarded in my language, Thou knowest that I have done so for the purpose of dispelling the gloom of my mind, and not with a bad conscience!"

And as though in this last confession there were couched an infirmity with which he would have reason to reproach himself before God, he continued in a louder tone than before, "You ministers, and all here present assembled around my dying bed, I repeat it solemnly before you: you are my witnesses that I have recanted nothing of that which I have written on Repentance and Justification against the Pope, but that I hold it all to be the true gospel and divine truth. If I appear to some to have been too free and severe, I do not regret it. God knows I have wished evil to no one."

And now again he directed his eyes upwards, and said, "Again, O Lord, I come before thee and say, 'If it is thy will that I should die on this bed, let thy will be done! Ah! how much rather would I have shed my blood for thy sake!'"

Tears copiously bedewed his cheeks, until gradually a saintly smile betokening perfect contentment and resignation to the will of God, spread itself over his face. He

now closed his eyes, laid his folded arms over his breast, and nothing moved but his trembling lips in silent prayer to God.

The silence of death prevailed in the chamber, which no one ventured to interrupt. Even the afflicted Catharine, whose heart was almost broke from anguish, forced herself to repress her troubles and sorrows, whilst she gazed with unspeakable interest on her husband thus engaged in devotion with God.

All of a sudden Luther exclaimed, "Where is my little son?—where is my beloved Hans? let me see him, that I may bless him before I die."

And, as the servant brought the child, the mother took it in her arms, and carried it to the bed of her husband. The child smiled, and extended its little hands towards the father. He could not raise his own arms in order to press the child to his heart, and in a trembling and low tone he said, "I can at least see you, if nothing more. You good, poor child, you smile at me just as if nothing ailed me. You rejoice just like the angels in heaven, and do not know that you, perhaps, may be an orphan to-day. My enemies will also be yours; they will try to disgrace you on my account, but I know that God is a father of the orphan, and a judge of the widow. The Lord bless you, my child!"

"What a poor, unfortunate woman I am!" exclaimed Catharine, amid convulsive weeping. "What will become of me, if you should die?"

"Be of good courage!" replied Luther. "If the Lord designs to take me to Himself, I beseech you to yield to His holy will. I know that the papists, who cannot destroy my works, will attack and calumniate my character

and person. They will scoff at you and me, and our marriage. But, my dearly beloved Katy, you are, before God, and by the sanction of His word, my lawful wife! Let the blind ungodly world say what it pleases! Conform yourself to God's word and cling to it, and then you will have a sure defence against the devil and all calumniators."

Catharine was unable to reply; her tears stifled her voice. Wearied almost to death, she seated herself at the foot of the bed, took the child on her lap, and then pressing it to her bosom, she finally said, "Yes, dear little Hans, we will not fear. God feeds even the ravens, and why not you and me?"

This scene moved Luther's heart, and he exclaimed, "O, my God, I thank Thee with all my heart that it was Thy will I should be poor on earth; and, hence, I have no house, nor lands, nor money, nor property of any kind to leave to my wife and family. As Thou gavest her to me, so give I her to Thee, Gracious Father. Support her, guide her, preserve her, as Thou hast cherished, guided and preserved me, for Thou art the Father and Protector of the widow and orphan."

"You know, dearest Katy," he then continued, turning to his wife, "that, besides the two silver cups, we have nothing. But the Lord has all things. I commend you, my beloved wife, and you, poor orphan child, to my faithful and merciful God."

These consoling words filled the heart of the poor woman with peace and contentment in God. She grasped his ice-cold hand, and said: "My dear Doctor, if it is God's will, I would rather know you to be with Him than with me. But it is not only I and my dear child, but

many other pious people, who require your presence! Hence, be not distressed on my account. I commend you to God's will. But I hope and trust in God, that He will graciously preserve you."

"God put that into your heart," replied Luther, calmly. He then lifted up his half-closed eyes, and said, "O, my dear Lord Jesus Christ, who hast promised, 'ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened,' grant that I may ask of Thee, not silver and gold, but a strong, unshaken faith! Let me find, not the applause and enjoyment of the world, but consolation and refreshment through Thy sacred and saving Word. Open unto me, as I knock. I desire nothing which the world calls great and exalted, for I am not better, before Thee, than other men; but give me Thy Holy Spirit to enlighten my heart, to strengthen and comfort me in my trouble and sorrow, and preserve me in true faith and unwavering confidence in Thy grace until my end, amen!"

During this, the physician and the women had diligently applied the remedies, and Schurff had the gratification of feeling a more active pulse in the patient. His countenance also gradually assumed a better appearance; a slight tinge of red covered his pale, ash-colored cheeks; his respiration became more vigorous, and, particularly, his eyes assumed more and more their usual brilliancy and animation.

"I feel," exclaimed Luther, joyfully; "I feel better, thank Heaven. I feel myself getting stronger, gradually. If I could only perspire, I hope that, by God's grace, there would be no further danger this time."

The physician coincided in this view, and requested those present to leave the room, that the patient might

rest more quietly, and be brought into a state of perspiration. Catharine, on her part, requested the dear friends to remain a little while, and take supper with her below in the dining-room.

And after they had commended the sick man into the hands of the heavenly Physician, they left him and followed Catharine into the lower room.

In half an hour, the physician entered the room with a countenance indicating extreme gratification. "I bring good news!" he exclaimed. "The heavenly Physician has blessed our labors. A free perspiration has commenced, and we may now hope that all danger is over."

And, with this consoling message in their hearts, Bugenhagen and Jonas entered the sick man's chamber for a few moments, saluted him, wished him a peaceful night, and then went home.

And when, on the following morning, they came to see him, they discovered that the physician had not been deceived in his hopes. The painful roaring in the patient's ears had not altogether ceased, but he had visibly gained in strength.

When they returned in the evening, they found him in his wife's apartment.

"The waves of the sea do not roar any more!" he exclaimed, as they entered, and extended his hand to them joyfully. "This time the messenger of Satan has buffeted me with his fist that I might not be unduly exalted, as he once treated Paul. But the Lord, who commands the winds and the waves, has calmed the storm."

"Thank the Lord!" said Jonas.

"Brother Jonas!" continued Luther; "yesterday is worthy of being remembered by me. I was in a severe

school, and was sorely tried. But the Lord leads into the grave and delivers again. He kills and makes alive, for He is the Lord of life and death. To Him be praise, honor and glory for ever, amen."

CHAPTER XVI.

LOVE AND JEALOUSY—REVENGE AND INSANITY.

Thus saith the Lord, To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. —Is. lxvi. 2.

LEONARD FICHTNER was busily employed in the workshop of Master Homberg. He was not carving an altar or a saint to adorn some Romish chapel, neither could he expect that the figure he was gradually bringing to completion would secure the approbation of his master. He was working on his own account, and the only compensation he looked for was the satisfaction to be derived from the success of his artistic effort.

But his work was in every sense a masterpiece. Without a model, or sketch, or any other preparation, he labored with his chisel and knife at the rude mass of wood that one might have supposed he was cutting and carving only for pastime; but, after nearly three weeks' work, a beautiful female head, with long flowing ringlets, fine open forehead, lovely countenance, with the expression of genuine child-like fidelity, and with half-closed eyes, grew out of the shapeless block.

And when, during the progress of his work, he suddenly stopped, he would cover his eyes with his hand as though he saw the original in his own mind, and then with a happy smile he would again ply his chisel with redoubled diligence and care. With the rising of the sun he was at work, and continued at it without interruption. He neglected his ordinary meals, and would rather not have slept at all, just as if his life depended on the completion of the work.

One day, towards the end of July, 1527, whilst he was diligently at work, he was somewhat alarmed by a slight noise, and, when he looked towards the door, Catharine stood before him; no longer the fresh, fair, healthy Catharine, but a form emaciated by grief and cares. The rose of her cheek was blanched, her eyes were surrounded with deep shadows, and destitute of fire and life; even her dress betrayed, if not disorder and carelessness, yet an almost abject poverty. No rings, or bracelets, or golden chains, adorned her person; even her rosary, which was composed of brilliant pearls, and which became her so well, was also absent.

"Miss Catharine!" exclaimed he, astonished, and yet rejoiced. "The physician, then, has permitted you to leave your chamber to-day? I bid you welcome to the free, fresh air of heaven, and God bless your going out and coming in!"

"I thank you, Sir," she replied, with a feeble voice; "but I cannot remain long. Even this short walk has completely exhausted me. I am very weary and weak."

"Take a seat," said Fichtner, and hastily cleaned off a chair, which was covered with all sorts of tools. "I will set the chair at the door, that you may undisturbed enjoy the fresh air and the warm sun. How are you to-day?"

Catharine smiled painfully, and said, "Do you also ask the crushed flower that question? It cannot answer, but it dies slowly still."

"O no, no!" replied Leonard, deeply moved. "The crushed flower does not wither, and the bruised reed does not break, if the heavenly gardener holds over them his protecting hand. You have been grievously afflicted, but the Lord has awakened you to new life. Rejoice, Catharine, and thank the heavenly physician who has restored you thus far."

"You shall not deceive me with a false hope!" said she, mildly. "Have you not heard that yesterday the pestilence has broken out here in Wittenberg? It will also seize on me, and I have no strength to flee or resist."

"No, not you!" replied Fichtner, quickly; "but the great and merciful God, who has sent this terrible calamity to us, has the power and strength. Be not afraid, dear Catharine. It is not yet exactly certain whether the pestilence has broken out; and even if it is so, you know that no one can escape from death. Will you not cling to the words, 'For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord?'"

"I do not fear death!" said she, quite disconsolately, and by no means in the tone of one conscious of her readiness to die. "I shall rejoice when they bear me out to my grave!"

"Dear Catharine!" exclaimed Leonard, "I do not wish to wound your feelings, inasmuch as you, without this, have often said that I have no sympathy with you; but yet I cannot endure to see you comforting yourself with a false hope. You say you will be glad to die, but your heart is not glad. And even if you are not alarmed at death, yet you are so willing and ready to die."

"My God!" cried Catharine, deeply mortified. "You are anxious, then, that I should die? Am I such a hindrance to your happiness that you will not allow me the least space on earth?"

"What injustice you do me!" replied the young man. "God knows how glad I am that you have again risen from your sick-bed, after you were nigh to death. I only meant, Catharine, that it is not Christian to deceive ourselves about death. I do not regard it as a sin to confess that I wish to live yet a long time. This desire comes from my heart, but yours does not."

"You would be the first happy man who ever wished to die," said she. "Death is welcome and pleasing to the unhappy; and whether I am happy or wretched, no one, I should suppose, knows better than I do."

"What is it to be happy? what is it to be wretched?" asked Leonard. "I have seen happy people who, in their hearts, were the most wretched; and I know others who would not be unhappy, if they only had a genuine heart-felt faith. Dear Catharine, the Christian glories also in tribulation."

"You aim," replied Catharine, with a dejected tone, "you aim at robbing me of all my comfort. But I know that I shall be glad when my miserable life ends."

"Catharine!" exclaimed Leonard, "that is not consistent with the sentiment of *dying to the Lord*; you regard death only as a deliverance from the sorrows and evils of this life; but is there not behind the death of the body, behind the grave another life, into which we can only enter when the grace of God opens the door?"

"Not only as a deliverance from temporal sufferings!" replied Catharine, evasively. "Death is the necessary decomposition of the crushed flower."

"O why do you evade my question?" asked Fichtner. "Why will you not listen to that better word that speaks within you? You know as well as I that it is not all over for eternity with the death of the body. You know that we shall all rise again, but some to life and others to condemnation. Do you not also wish to live with the Lord? Do you not wish to be saved?"

She was silent, and wiped the tears from her eyes. "Yes," said she, after a pause, "I desire at least there to have the experience of a happy heart!"

"At least there? Do you mean to say that you have never had that experience on earth? Poor, poor Catharine——"

He could not speak longer to her, for she suddenly gave such alarming symptoms of fainting, that he hastened to her, and sustained her in his arms.

"Leave me!" she entreated him, in scarcely audible words. "I am already somewhat better. My hour is not yet come; yet it is not far off. But be not deceived by that," she continued, with a suddenly renewed strength, and even attempted to force a smile. "Whom will it concern on earth whether I live or die? Speak of something else, Mr. Fichtner. Tell me something agreeable about your own life, your beautiful country, your sainted mother. Have you not also a sister?"

But, before Fichtner could answer, Catharine rose from her seat in evident excitement, and, as if under the influence of a slight chill, she continued, "I cannot remain here any longer! It will do me good to walk to and fro somewhat!"

She had, however, only advanced a few steps, when she again resumed her seat, and thus spoke in a calmer tone:

"Mr. Fichtner, during my sickness you were kind to me; the servants told me that you watched whole nights at my bed, and acted as my substitute in waiting on my father. May heaven reward you, for I cannot recompense you in any other way. A dying person can no longer be a nurse. But tell me — at midnight and at times when I was nearest to death, and could not open my eyes nor move my tongue from pure weakness, I felt a soft, tender hand gently drawn across my brow; I heard suppressed weeping and whispered prayer, and then, as it were, a tiptoe passage through the door. It was not you, though you were present. Tell me, who was it?"

Leonard hesitated about answering. At length he said, "I also laid my hand on your forehead to feel whether the fever was still high!"

"It was not you!" she replied, somewhat abruptly, and with slightly tinged cheeks. "You do not wish to tell me, but I know it without you; it was Margaret."

At these words her voice trembled, and she covered her eyes with her hand.

"Yes, it was Margaret," Leonard assured her. "Was it not right, Catharine?"

"Who conducted her that long distance to our house at midnight?" she enquired, without answering his question.

"I myself," replied he. "She begged me to do it; she would have no rest until, as she said, until she could lay her hand on your face."

"And what did she pray about?" she asked, quite excited. "I know that she prayed."

"She prayed silently!" said he; "but I knew, without her telling me, that she prayed for you; for your restoration!"

"No, no!" rejoined she, in an elevated tone, "I know better; I heard it distinctly; she accused me before God."

"Catharine!" said he, in deep sorrow, "how little you know of the pious, child-like heart of your sister! Margaret is incapable of accusing anybody before God except herself. Oh! you do not know how tenderly your sister loves you."

"No, no, you will not deceive me!" she continued, with increasing excitement. "I understood every word she uttered. She said that I alienated my father's affections from her; that I mingled poison in her cup of pleasure; that I expelled her from the house; and that God had written it all in His book; and that no confession or absolution could ever release me from the guilt. Oh, Sir, do pity me! I do not know what I am talking about! I am losing my mind!"

She now hastily rose, and was about to leave; but her weakness would not allow her to proceed, and she sunk back again into her chair. She gave full vent to her tears, and Fichtner had not the courage to interrupt her grief by a single word.

Gradually the agitated mind of Catharine was calmed. Her heart had trembled with fear of the divine judgment, but that heart had not yet felt the love of God; for she did not understand the doctrine of God's grace in Christ. Fichtner plainly saw that she affected a happy demeanor, which really expressed on her pale, emaciated countenance, more bitter grief than cheerful contentment.

"I observe," she now said, "that you are working at a female head"—and she rose and advanced nearer. But suddenly, as she had cast a scrutinizing eye upon it, she

shrunk back, hastily turned round; laid both her hands on her eyes, and, in a tone of utter despair, remarked, "*And even that too!*"

But this conflict did not endure long.

"I knew it!" she continued, as if in soliloquy. "Am I not a foolish woman to be alarmed! Tell me, dear Mr. Fichtner," turning to him as calmly as if nothing had happened, "did Margaret sit for this likeness?"

"No!" replied he, with a deep blush, and downcast eyes, as though he felt guilty of having done Catharine wrong; but he soon recovered from his confusion, and proceeded: "Dear Catharine, you know that I have never concealed my thoughts from you. I have also spoken *that* word to you which I knew would wound you. Your question now strikes me, and I know not why, like an accusation. Let me tell you how this has happened. I felt inclined to carve some figure, and I at first concluded to try my skill on an image of Christ. But I was alarmed at the majesty of the Son of God, even in his humiliation on earth, and had not the courage to project a visible figure of Him who is invisibly in my heart as Lord and King of Heaven and Earth. Then I thought of the apostles, but they stood higher than my art and faith could reach. At length I came to this conclusion—do what you can, carve a figure of your own interior life—an image of your thoughts—a visible likeness of your faith. Yes, dear Catharine, I went to work with the design of producing the *picture of a soul happy in the Lord*; and, as it grew under my hands, and I had finished the face, lo! it was the likeness of your dear sister Margaret!"

“A picture of faith, and blind?” she asked, with forced composure.

Leonard looked steadily at her, and said, “Dear sister, do you not know the words of our Lord, ‘Blessed are they who see not, and yet believe?’”

“No!” she replied. “Do you, by that, mean to say that the blind only can have faith?”

“How shall I answer you?” exclaimed he. “Yes and no! *Yes*, if you mean the humble heart which, of its strength, cannot comprehend either the Being or the righteousness or the grace of God, and yet joyfully and believingly accepts the revealed word of God; and *no*, if you mean that, for example, you or I cannot believe because God has given us sound eyes. Do you not believe, dear Catharine?”

She gazed on him with an earnest and melancholy look, and said, “Of what advantage is it that I answer you. You have often enough told me that I am an unbeliever. You have had no regard for my prayers or penances; you have even mocked at my tears; from your first entrance into our house you have been my enemy, and you judged and condemned me, even before you knew whether I was not worthy of kinder treatment. From the beginning you have preferred my sister, and depreciated me in your words and actions; you have taken,” she continued, in a most passionate tone, “you have taken pleasure in my sufferings, and have laughed at my tears; you have been glad when I was in trouble; you have —”

“Catharine!” exclaimed Leonard, almost alarmed at the vehemence of her accusation. “Is it possible that you really entertain that opinion of me? how heartless and destitute of all love of God and man, how awfully

blinded by error and sin must I not be if your opinion is correct?"

"And it is correct," she continued, vehemently and bitterly; "mention the word or act by which you have ever showed me any kindness. You cannot do it. For everybody else you had a kind word, a friendly look; only for me, you had sharp, pointed arrows, which pierced my very heart. It was you who threw me on a bed of sickness; you are the cause of my fading and withering like a crushed flower!"

"God forgive your sin!" said Fichtner, oppressed with grief. "If I really bore this terrible weight of guilt which you load on me, I would be the most unhappy man on earth, and would have to doubt of my salvation. But you know not what you are saying; you are sick in body and soul."

Catharine laughed like an insane person, and said, "Does that touch your feelings? I have for months longed after this opportunity, as one famishing longs after a cooling draught. Feel it in your inmost soul; let it consume your heart; let it gnaw your vitals like a death-worm: it will be but the smallest portion of the agony which you have occasioned me. And now go to your work again, and carve and cut at those blind eyes as long as you please; you will never impart life to that dead wood!"

She arose, and was about to leave the workshop in haste; but Fichtner grasped her by the hand, and said, "Catharine, I cannot let you go away with such impressions on your mind. You may judge and condemn me; you may regard me as the greatest of all sinners; I will not complain; but not one of your accusations has the least

foundation. You have believed that I hated you; answer me, do we pray for those whom we hate?"

"I understand you," she replied, with a sneer. "You would say that you have had sympathy for me."

"Well, if you choose to call it so, I will say yes," continued the young man. "I had, and now have sympathy for you, because I most sincerely wished to see you happy, and because you have no better friend on earth than I am. Catharine," he continued, in a softer voice, "everything in relation to this matter will yet turn out well. Drive these thoughts about dying from your mind. Your father has risen up, as it were, from death, and God will certainly yet wake him up to spiritual life. Believe it, dear sister, there is no wound so deep which the hand of the Lord cannot heal. In love to Christ everything at last will be reconciled."

Catharine was silent. Her extreme exhaustion, after such violent excitement, and the affectionate language of Leonard, calmed the tumult of her heart. She supported her weary head on her hand, and closed her eyes. For a long time she remained silent in that position, whilst Fichtner stood before her, contemplating her with an expression of the sincerest sympathy.

Finally she looked up, and spoke calmly: "Mr. Fichtner, you are right; I am sick in body and soul. I beg you to forgive and forget all that I have said. I scarcely now remember what I have said. If I have offended you, pray forgive me."

"Dear sister!" exclaimed Leonard, "I have nothing to forgive you. You have not done me wrong, but only yourself. Do believe me that I have always wished you well."

He was about to continue, when he was interrupted by

a slight noise in the yard, which sounded like the approach of human footsteps. He went to the door, and, to his great alarm, he saw Homberg advancing towards the workshop.

"Your father is coming!" he cried out to Catharine; "what shall we do?"

"Only be calm," said she. "He knows neither you nor me, and will do us no harm. Speak on; he will not hear nor take any notice of what you may say."

But Leonard was not satisfied with these assurances. With uneasy looks, he saw the old man advancing nearer, and at last entering the work-room.

Homberg had become, as regards his appearance, almost another man; he had a healthy aspect, much more robust than before his severe attack; the hollow, emaciated cheeks had attained a certain fulness, and the eyes had lost their dark shadow. He had not the appearance of a sick man, or even of a convalescent; for he had put on his working-apron as though he were engaged in his usual occupation.

As he passed them both, he looked on them with indifference; did not speak a word; proceeded to his old place of working, and carefully examined his tools.

"Shall I prevent him?" said Fichtner, deeply concerned when he saw Homberg taking up a large knife and trying its sharpness on a piece of wood, which he split in two.

"Do not disturb him!" begged Catharine. "There is nothing to fear."

Homberg then advanced towards an almost finished figure of the Virgin Mary, examined it carefully from every side; drew still nearer, and then receded; and at last lifted his arm with the knife, as if he were about to strike a powerful blow. Fichtner then rushed up to him,

and, snatching the instrument from his hand, said, "You must not do that, dear master! spare your own work! that is a master-piece!"

Homberg looked at him coldly and indifferently, and made no resistance; but he grasped the figure and carried it to the farthest and most secret corner of the room. As he now looked around, his eye fell on the half-completed figure from the skilful hand of Fichtner. Struck with amazement, he stood still, rubbed his eyes and forehead with his hand, and said, as if half-dreaming, "How is this! Yes, that is Saint Margaret! But what was I thinking of? The arrangement for the cross is wanting, on which her right-arm must be supported. But I can do it yet!"

He now opened a small cupboard, took out a piece of red lead-pencil, and drew with hasty, but steady hand, on the wide, and as yet untouched bottom of the block, the outline of both feet; at the right foot the base of the cross, as far up as the transverse piece on which her right arm was to lean, and then said with a cheerful smile, "It will do! That will be a glorious figure!"

Fichtner, highly excited at what Homberg had said and done, now discerned that a master was examining his work. He involuntarily exclaimed, "Certainly, certainly! How foolish and blind I was not to think of the cross!"

"Do you also see it now, Urban?" added Homberg, suddenly, and in a friendly tone, as though he were speaking to an old, dear friend, and fellow-workman. "You have often seen Saint Margaret in Milan, but never without a cross. Faith must necessarily lean on a cross. What say you?" he then continued. "Do you say that the eyes are too much covered, and almost have the appearance of be-

ing blind? I did that purposely. The faith which sees as men see is no faith! No, Urban, you must not find fault with the eyes."

"But is not the head, perhaps, too much inclined?" asked Leonard.

"Not at all," replied Homberg. "I have also well considered that. It is true, faith looks upward; but that must be expressed by the uplifted hand. Faith is humility; the head must be inclined, to indicate that the ear wishes to hear the voice of God more distinctly, and that the eye is looking into its own heart. No, brother Urban, do not find fault with the figure; it is the best piece of work which I have ever carved!"

And now he again scrutinized the individual features of the face, nodded his head with smiles of satisfaction, and then hastily seized a small knife lying on the work-table. Fichtner was alarmed, and was about to take it from him; but a look from Catharine deterred him from his purpose, and he waited with painful anxiety the result of Homberg's purpose. But he seated himself calmly on the chair, and with a steady and skilful hand cut out several small chips from both sides of the head towards the eyes; and when he had done it, he exclaimed, "Now it's all right! Look at it, Urban; can a likeness of Saint Margaret be more perfect?"

Leonard was amazed and gratified; the beloved, pious face of Margaret stood before him in a perfect likeness. He had often said to himself, that there was something wanting somewhere; but he could not discover it. Now he observed it, and, clapping his hands with joy, he exclaimed, "Yes, that is Margaret!"

Homberg now conducted himself very strangely. He all of a sudden was seized with a fit of devotion. He took

off his cap and threw himself on his knees before the image, folded his hands, and said, "Holy Margaret, pray for me!" He continued in this posture for several minutes, uttering incoherent prayers, in which he made several dark allusions to his own blind daughter Margaret. He rose from his knees, bowed before the image, made the sign of the cross, calmly left the work-room, and proceeded to his own chamber.

Fichtner and Catharine did nothing to disturb the image-worship of this insane man. Fichtner was deeply moved at the terrible power of an accusing conscience, which cannot have true peace, because it does not comprehend the way, nor the truth, nor the life in Christ.

But Catharine sat still, with her head bowed down, a true picture of decaying health and life.

During the insane prayer of her poor father, she was several times tempted to fly from the sight of such a humiliating confession; but she was not able to do so, and occasionally looked at Fichtner as if imploring his compassion. When her father had left the room, her bosom heaved with deep respiration, and then she turned to the young man, and, with forced composure, she asked, "Do you also pray to Saint Margaret?"

But before Leonard, quite agitated by this question, could answer, Catharine made a powerful effort, rose up, and left the room as fast as possible, exclaiming, "Do not follow me!"

Leonard remained standing, and looked after her with painful feelings; and then, as if he would suppress all thoughts and conflicts in his own heart, occasioned by the conduct of Catharine, in an almost inaudible voice he uttered these words: "God is Love!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PLAGUE IN WITTENBERG, AND DESPAIR.

Watch, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

MATT. xxiv. 42.

THE sun was going down with a pale, sickly light. A heavy, oppressive atmosphere hung, like a thick veil, over Wittenberg. The intense heat of the day did not moderate with the setting of the sun.

Stephen Arnhold, the lieutenant, with whom we became acquainted in the guest-room of the Black Eagle, was advancing towards the city from Torgau, and, with apparent trepidation, he passed through the gate. Notwithstanding the oppressive heat, he had a thick cloth thrown round his neck, which covered his mouth, in order to prevent the admission of air, and in his hand he held a small bottle, which he occasionally applied to his nostrils, and then drew a deep breath. The streets, usually crowded in the evening, were deserted; here and there a few thickly-veiled persons passed each other, but without mutual recognition or salutation. All doors were closed, and windows darkened and covered.

Before the door of a house which the Lieutenant passed, lay the corpse of a woman, who was here suddenly stricken

down by death, which was to remain there until midnight, when the black wagon would come along to pick up all the dead and convey them to their graves.

The pestilence had broken out in the unhappy city.

As the Lieutenant passed the church of St. Augustine, he heard the sound of sacred music. He entered the sanctuary. A melancholy twilight filled the vast house, and only from the altar glittered the pale rays of the burning wax candles. A large congregation was assembled, and all, in a kneeling posture, were singing, with half-suppressed voice, but with deep devotion,

“ Christ, thou Lamb of God,
Who bearest the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us,
And give us Thy peace.”

Then Martin Luther ascended the pulpit, and commenced a sermon adapted to the times and the occasion. It was one of those soul-stirring appeals to the consciences of his hearers which Luther knew so well how to make. His theme was death, judgment and eternity, and this he handled with extraordinary ability and effect. The pestilence was raging; the public mind was filled with alarm; friends were dying; the voice of lamentation was heard all around; no one conceived himself secure, and terrible apprehension seized the people.

On all occasions Luther preached with great power; but on this, when all around was calculated to awaken the attention of his hearers, and to impress them deeply, his words seemed like those of an apostle, and humbled them in the dust before God, and drew out their hearts in fervent prayer.

When he had concluded his discourse, the whole assembly again fell on their knees, and, as with one voice, intoned one of those old German poetical prayers, which are so full of life and spiritual power.

After the hymn was finished, the people still continued on their knees for a few moments. They then rose, and slowly, and as with reluctance, they left the house of God, as though afraid to depart from this protecting asylum and expose themselves to the danger without.

The Lieutenant felt himself wonderfully comforted and sustained, and delayed also in leaving the place of prayer, but not from fear of the terrible pestilence, but to enjoy as long as possible the sacred influence of the consecrated place where he had fervently prayed, and where he had heard the heart-stirring exhortations to prepare to die, such as Martin Luther alone could give.

When Stephen Arnhold finally observed that he was alone in the house of God, he advanced towards the door and saw a veiled female form crouched down in a corner of the vestibule. The sexton locked the doors, but the poor sufferer did not stir. Arnhold was moved with sympathy, and advanced nearer to the woman.

"Pardon me," said he, in a tone of tenderness. "Perhaps you are sick, and are too weak to walk of yourself? If that is the case, accept the offer of my help."

"Let me remain here," said the person.

"But you are alone!" rejoined he, "and the sexton will soon lock this outer door also."

"Is no person permitted to spend the night in the house of God?"

"Oh, I presume so," said he. "But if anything should

happen to you during the night, you would be altogether without assistance."

The woman now slowly moved her head, and replied, "God alone can help the dying, and here I am in His house. Go your own way, and leave me here."

"No!" said Arnhold, in a decided tone: "you are already sick, and I should be guilty of a great sin if I were to leave you here. You must go with me and accept my help."

"Do you mean to say that I *must* live, because you wish it?" asked she, in a voice mingled with bitterness. "Do you set yourself up against the will of God?"

"God forbid," said Arnhold. "But do you not remember those words of Scripture, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God?' but you are tempting God by your conduct now. You will not deny that you are sick, and now, if you obstinately refuse the help of man which God has sent you, you challenge Him! I do not know you, and I am a poor preacher of repentance, but this I can tell you, the hand of God already rests heavily on this unhappy city, and do you intend to heap additional Divine displeasure on yourself? have you not heard Father Luther exhort you to set your house in order before you die? Is there no person on earth whose pardon you must ask for offences done? or is there none who would like to hear the words of forgiveness from your lips? Oh! do not tempt God!"

Whilst Arnhold was thus speaking, the woman's looks and actions showed that her heart was moved. "You are right!" said she, with a suppressed voice. "I did not think of it, that I dare not die yet on account of my sins, which are not yet forgiven. And yet—" She here sud-

denly stopped, and her head fell on her breast. She scarcely had strength to say, "Help me—I am dying!"

Arnhold raised her up in his arms, and applied the vial which he carried about him to her nostrils, and bathed her forehead with a portion of its contents.

She had only fainted, and she soon recovered; but she continued to lie helpless in the arms of the young man.

"Come, only come!" he besought her, and then conducted her out of the house of God. "May I ask who you are, and where you live?"

"Lead me into Coswick street!" she entreated him; and then added, in a tone expressing intense mental suffering, "Yes, take me there, if you have any sympathy with a poor, unfortunate girl!"

"I will not leave you until I have secured your safety and protection!" replied Arnhold. "But, take courage! Think of what Luther has just said. Fear not! the hand of the Lord can change all things! Do you feel better?"

"I am gaining strength," said she, "but I am still very weak. Do you know the symptoms of an attack of the pestilence?"

"No!" he rejoined, whilst a secret shudder pervaded his body. "But dismiss such thoughts from your mind. Fear does much harm."

"I am not afraid!" said she, with a painful smile. "That person who desires to die is not alarmed when death comes."

"You are a young woman!" remarked the Lieutenant, with an agitated mind. "How miserable you must be, if you already wish to die! but it is not proper for you to speak thus! The longer our life, the more grace is displayed! May I ask what has made you so unhappy that you would rather die than live?"

"I know well," continued the young man, as she remained silent, and partly withdrew her arm from his—"I know well that it is rather presumptuous in me to ask the question; neither do I wish to know your secrets. I only thought that at the proper time you might not refuse instruction and comfort, even from a stranger. "See, young woman," he continued, and pointed to a company of people who were passing by on the other side of the street, silently and thoughtfully, with their faces covered to the eyes, and loaded with packages and sacks. "See, these people are flying from the city to escape from the pestilence. They are trying to save their lives, and you are wishing to lose yours."

"I am only yielding to my destiny!" she answered, in an impatient tone.

A young man now approached them, and scrutinized both with unusual earnestness. "Heaven be thanked!" he at length exclaimed. "Have I found you at last, Catharine? For the past hour I have gone through the market-places and the streets seeking you, and enquiring of every one I met whether they had seen you. Catharine, why did you occasion me so much anxiety? Even your father enquired after you for the first time during many weeks. Catharine, it is not right that you give us so much trouble!"

"Am I a child," she answered, coldly, "that I dare not leave the house without being watched? And what right have you to follow my steps?"

"You will not repel me by such language," replied the young man, who was no other than Léonard Fichtner. "I thank God from my whole heart that I have at length found you. The person to whom you have entrusted your-

self, tells plainly enough that some misfortune has befallen you, and that my anxiety about you has not been needless. Even if you do not tell me where you have been, and what has happened to you, yet I am very glad that I can now conduct you back to your father's house. Will you leave the lady to my care?" said he to her conductor, on whose arm Catharine still hung.

"I have no right, nor any claim, to this lady!" replied Stephen Arnhold. "I found her in the house of God, where she remained behind, alone; and it was only a weakness which overcame her that compelled her to trust herself to my arm. Will you go with this man?" he now asked Catharine.

"You are glad," answered she, bitterly—"you are glad to get rid of this inconvenient burden!"

"Oh no!" said the Lieutenant; "I will conduct you to your father's house, if you will allow me. But do you not belong to this man? Are you not his sister or his friend? Should you not rather trust yourself to him than to me, a stranger?"

"You promised," replied she, evasively, "not to leave me until you had secured me safety and protection. My father's house is not far from here; my name is Catharine Homberg! I pray you, conduct me to my father's house."

"Catharine Homberg!" exclaimed Arnhold, almost alarmed; "the lovely, agreeable young lady in Coswick street? No—yet——" He here suddenly interrupted himself, feeling that his amazement at the complete decay of youthful beauty would be painful to the poor girl. "You are sick; support yourself on my arm, as you desire it; I will deliver you into the hands of your father."

Both thus proceeded further, whilst Fichtner, deeply

dejected, followed them. When they had arrived at Homberg's house, Catharine called the domestic. When she came, Catharine thanked her conductor, and then retired to her chamber.

"I know you," Fichtner now said to the Lieutenant, whom he accompanied down the street. "You are an officer in the service of our illustrious Elector. I was present, when, at the Black Eagle, you related that glorious testimony which Myconius bore to our faith."

"And you," replied Arnhold, "and you are the young artist from Milan; I now recognize you again; so you see we are not altogether strangers. May I ask you what unfortunate affair has happened to poor Catharine?"

"God alone sees the heart," replied Leonard. "I believe that the judgment of the Lord has come upon her; but, with the judgment, his kingdom also. You said that you found her in the house of God, and alone?"

"Yes, in St. Augustine's church! I was passing by, and heard singing and prayer. I went in, and had the pleasure of hearing a consoling sermon from Father Luther on Christian preparation for death. She wanted to stay there all night, and I had some trouble in getting her away."

"The Lord is doing His work in her heart!" said Fichtner. "Thou dear, sainted mother, thy prayers are more signally heard than you could anticipate."

"I should be very glad," continued Arnhold, "if I could have an hour's conversation with you to-morrow. My time is limited. To-morrow morning I must execute a message from His Grace, my master, and deliver a packet into Father Luther's hands, and if possible be back in Torgau to-morrow evening."

"I will be at your service!" said Leonard.

"I shall lodge at the Black Eagle," he continued; "come to me to-morrow morning early. How glad I would be if you were to accompany me to Torgau! Are you not afraid to remain in this city, now scourged with the pestilence? You have no home here, and will you not avoid the danger? Go with me to Torgau."

"It is true, I have no home here," answered Fichtner; "but I did not come here of myself; the Lord in heaven sent me here. I must remain."

"And you are not afraid of being attacked by the plague?" asked Arnhold.

"No!" said Fichtner, calmly. "Even if I were attacked, I would not die. That for which the Lord sent me here is not yet accomplished. God's will cannot contradict itself. I must remain here, until He himself tells me to go away."

"I do not understand your mystery!" said the Lieutenant; "but so much of it I plainly see, that Catharine Homberg has a share in it. But you have an honest, pious heart, and you can have no evil design in view. Continue then in your calling, and may God take you under His protection."

Thus the young men parted, and each proceeded to his place of abode.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FLIGHT FROM WITTENBERG, AND LUTHER'S FIRMNESS.

Fear not, for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. — Exod. xx. 20.

LUTHER had just entered into his family sitting-room, and was caressing his infant son, when his servant Wolff announced the presence of Melanchthon and Justus Jonas.

As soon as the door opened, Luther remarked, "I presume you have come to take your leave, dear Sirs?"

"You are right!" replied Melanchthon. "His Electoral Grace insists upon our flying from Wittenberg with the students, and repairing to Jena, to avoid the plague; and, if it is possible, we intend to go to-day. It seems hard, dear Doctor, to leave you here in this infected city!"

"And why?" asked Luther. "It does not become us ministers to be so over-anxious about our life and health. If we fly, the people will become more alarmed than they are; and every one who feels in the least degree unwell, will think he is attacked by the plague."

"But you will not deny," said Melanchthon, "that a faithful pastor is more exposed to the danger of the contagion than others; yea, even more than the physician."

"I will not deny that," remarked Luther. "The spiritual physician must approach nearer to the sick than the

medical doctor, and spiritual medicine requires longer preparation than that in the drug-store; and when the physician of the body can do no more for his patient, then the spiritual doctor must still remain with him. But all that signifies nothing. God in an especial manner preserves his servants when they are not too presumptuous, and do not expose themselves unnecessarily to danger. We take with us the word of *life*; why should we fear *death*?"

"One thing appears strange to me!" said Jonas. "Formerly, when popery prevailed in this city, dangerous epidemics raged, but at that time the people did not betray such fear as now, whilst we should suppose that the light of the gospel would have taught them better, and composed their minds. How do you account for this?"

"It does not appear at all strange to me," replied Luther. "In the times of popery, the people relied on the merits and the holy works of monks and priests, and thought they were safe. But now, they have learned that every one must look to himself, and see what and how he believes. They no longer beget a false hope by depending on masses and the purchased intercessions of saints. Our people know better than this; and many of them being weak in the faith, and not trusting wholly to the Lord Jesus as they are taught to do, they tremble in view of the judgment before them. This accounts for the fact which appeared strange to you."

"How good it would be," said Melanchthon, "if we could drive this fear from the minds of the people! Dr. Schurff told me that just yesterday, two persons, a man and his wife, died more from fear than from the plague."

"Let us admonish them as loudly as we can!" exclaimed

Luther. "Let us teach them to comfort themselves in the Lord, and that every one should pursue his usual business, and to assist his neighbor when it is necessary. Let us earnestly tell them that the Christian should not fear death, for he has the word of life, and has by faith apprehended the Lord of life, who for us will overcome death."

"But," said Melanchthon, "you said yourself that the pastor should not expose himself unnecessarily to danger. Allow me to remind you of it. You are too benevolent to think of yourself or your own health. I must repeat it, it occasions me much pain and anxiety that you should remain alone in Wittenberg."

"Be not alarmed on my account, dear Philip," replied Luther, smiling. "If the Lord intends to protect me, He can do it here as well as elsewhere. How could I leave Wittenberg even if I wished, and thus allow myself to be driven away from my own flesh and blood? My dear Katy is compelled by peculiar circumstances to remain; Martha, the servant girl, is down with the plague; my little Hans is not well since yesterday; and I am not recovered from my severe attack. Our going would be more dangerous than our staying. Besides all this, the sick and dying must be attended to, and furnished with the instructions and consolations of the word of God."

"But that, properly speaking, is not your duty, allow me to say," added Jonas. "Dr. Bugenhagen, the pastor, with his two deacons, have resolved to remain."

"That may be," replied Luther. "But spiritual instruction cannot well be carried too far. There will not be too many of us ministers here. You may go, dear Sirs, and I hope you will return safely to us, when the Lord shall have removed this scourge from our city. For

my part, I am not afraid that the plague will prevail a long time."

Wolff, the servant, here entered, and announced a messenger from the Elector, with the direction to deliver a communication, and to await a reply.

Stephen Arnhold, the Lieutenant, now made his appearance, bowed reverently, and gave into Luther's hand a letter, besides a special salutation from the Elector.

It was a brief letter, which Luther had soon read. "His Electoral Grace means well!" he then said. "My dear Sirs, His Grace commands me to go with you to Jena!"

"And will you not obey this gracious command?" asked Melanchthon. "Will you not regard this as a sign that you are bound to flee from the danger for the sake of our good cause?"

"Our most gracious Elector," replied Luther, "is certainly a pious and benevolent man, who cheerfully follows God's will wherever he recognizes it; but he is also a poor mortal just as we are, and subject with us to the word of God. How now, dear Sirs, if I were to tell you that the Christian dare not fly from the danger of death? For what is it to die? What is this plague that has come upon us? I hold it to be nothing else than a judgment sent us on account of our sins. A Christian must submit to it in patience and strong faith, and wait the issues of the judgment. Would it not then be wrong, and display want of confidence in God, and great weakness of faith, to wish to escape from the hand of God?"

"And do you intend," asked Jonas, in a tone of deep anxiety, "to pronounce judgment on us because we design fleeing from the danger?"

"No, dear Jonas!" replied Luther. "You are con-

nected with the University, and if the University, by command of the Elector, be transferred to Jena, you are bound not to let the students go alone. If now the whole congregation of Wittenberg were to fly, the pastor should not remain behind. But he who wishes to stay should not be blamed, for he, at least, shows a strong faith."

"But such faith is not given to all," rejoined Melancthon.

"Yes, it is not a milk and water faith," said Luther. "And I will not censure him who does not possess it. We well know that the most faithful Christians, who, under other circumstances, cheerfully bear their cross, and follow the Lord Jesus, have been troubled in view of death. Who would not, however, applaud those who sincerely do not fear death, and willingly submit to the chastisements of God?"

"But do you not think," asked Jonas, "that even that may be done so as not to glorify God, but to tempt him?"

"Certainly," answered Luther; "and because the strong are less numerous than the weak, we cannot lay the same burden on all. When a man strong in the faith walks with a weaker brother, he must accommodate himself to him, and not proceed with all his strength, or he will walk the weak brother to death."

"That is a very consoling reflection," said Melancthon.

"Paul teaches the same thing," added Luther. "For, when he says, 'We who are strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak,' he plainly intimates that Christ will not reject his weak disciples."

After some further conversation on this view of the subject, Luther continued: "Preachers and pastors are,

by all means, bound to remain at their posts in times of distress. Here is a very plain command of Christ: 'A good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep, but a hireling seeth the wolf coming and fleeth.' Now the wolf may be the plague which destroys the people. In such unusual and alarming times, the sick and the dying especially require religious instruction and consolation. A pastor who, from fear of dying himself, avoids a sick man, and denies him religious comfort, is a hireling."

"But," enquired Jonas, "might it not occur, in seasons of extraordinary mortality, that all the pastors may die in a short time, and thus the poor people be left without a comforter?"

"That may be," responded Luther. "And, hence, I hold that, in such places where there are several pastors, they should agree that some of them should keep away from the plague, and not expose themselves to danger unnecessarily."

"St. Anastasius did that very same thing," said Melanchthon. "We read, that during the prevalence of the plague he fled from his church to save his life, because there were many others who were willing to stay and perform the pastoral duties."

"The same thing happened to St. Paul," added Jonas. "The brethren at Damascus let him down the wall in a basket, that he might escape. And in the turmoil at Ephesus, he suffered himself to be persuaded by the brethren not to mingle with the crowd and expose his life to peril, because it was not necessary."

"What do you think of our case, dear Doctor?" continued Jonas. "Do you think we are doing right in flying from Wittenberg in this season of danger?"

“You do not fly, Jonas, but you go whither his Electoral Grace directs you,” replied Luther. “Your pupils are going with you — the shepherds with the flock. You can exercise your Christian liberty, for there is no necessity for your staying.”

He dwelt a considerable time on this subject, much to the gratification of his two associates. At length said Melanchthon:

“Your observations please me much. For, although I know, dear Doctor, that you judge mildly of our going away, and represent it as obedience to the commands of his Electoral Grace out of pure kindness, yet I also know, that your opinion is always founded on God’s word, and that you would condemn us if the Scriptures condemned us!”

“How could I do otherwise, dear Philip?” replied Luther. “But, that you may see I do not, for love of you, pervert the Scriptures, I will remind you of several examples, taken from God’s word. Abraham was a great saint, whose shoe-latchet we all three are not worthy to unloose, but yet he feared death, and fled; and, in addition, gave out that Sarah was his sister. But, as he did this without any prejudice or injury to his neighbor, it was not reckoned to him as sin. And his son Isaac did the same thing. Jacob also fled from his brother Esau, that he might not be slain by him. David fled from Absalom. The prophet Uriah fled from King Joachim to Egypt, although that did not save him from death. And even Elijah, who, in the strength of his faith, had caused the priests of Baal to be slain, feared queen Jezebel, and fled into the wilderness. Even Moses himself fled into the land of Midian, from the King of Egypt. All these

fled to save their lives, but yet without exposing their neighbors to peril or injury, and after they had discharged their obligations."

"These examples," observed Jonas, "may not altogether satisfy a tender conscience, which fears to violate God's word in the least degree. These men did not fly from the plague, which you yourself, dear Doctor, regard as a merited judgment of God, and which we must patiently endure, but they fled from a death which the persecution and enmity of the wicked had prepared for them."

"Dear Jonas," replied Luther, "do not impose a burden on yourself which is not necessary. Death is death, in whatever shape it may come. You are authorized by the Scriptures to fly from pestilence, famine, the sword and wild beasts. If, with a good conscience, you can fly from one, why not from all four?"

After he had enlarged on this subject, and satisfied these men that they were not doing wrong absolutely in quitting the city, Jonas observed, "All you say, dear Doctor, is very encouraging; but, as you intend to remain here, although you are also connected with the students who accompany us to Jena, you must be aware that your example will be brought up as a ground of complaint against all who leave the city."

"Not at all, dear brother!" replied Luther, kindly. "God has bound me to this city, even if thousands fall around me. *I must remain here* to serve my neighbor. I have commended myself to Him, and I am contented."

"Yes, Doctor," said Jonas; "but every person has not such a strong faith as you."

"Well," continued Luther, "for such as are not bound

and can fly, as is the case with you and master Philip, I would compose such a prayer as this: "Lord God, I am weak and timid, hence I fly from this danger, and do all I can to avoid it. But, Lord, I am in thy hand, in this and all other perils. Thy will be done!"

The two friends were silent, and Luther proceeded to discourse on pastoral fidelity in times of general distress, showing the necessity and Christian duty of rendering service to the afflicted. He commented on the text, "I was sick and ye visited me not," in his usual masterly and practical style, and showed that these words apply not only to pastors, but to all Christians.

Whilst he was thus discoursing, and becoming more excited with every word he uttered, Doctor Schurff, accompanied by Madam Catharine, entered the room. Luther turned to him, and enquired about the present condition of the sick servant girl. A favorable report was made, but at the same time Schurff communicated the unpleasant intelligence that the other domestic had just been attacked, and that his faithful servant Wolff gave evident symptoms of the disease.

"Dear Doctor," now said Catharine, "you know that I cheerfully resign myself to the will of God in all things; but, as there are already three sick persons in the house, my anxiety about you and our dear little Hans oppresses me; for I fear you may also fall a victim to the plague."

"And you do not think of yourself, dear Katy?" asked Luther. "If I suffered any anxiety or fear to rise in my mind, it would be on your account. But I will not allow myself to be alarmed, neither on my own account nor on yours, nor on that of the child. It seems to me as if all on earth whom I hold dear had conspired to tempt me,

whether I shall stand by my Lord or yield. Philip and Jonas wish me to go; His Electoral Grace commands me to go; and now you, dear Katy, also insist on it. If I did go, it would be for your sake; but the Lord has granted me resignation and peace of mind, and we will leave things as they are. I will remain in my dear Wittenberg, and bear the burden with the congregation!"

"But," said the physician, "you already have a special burden to bear! You have the plague in your own house! Will you not at least allow these three sick persons to be conveyed to the city hospital? You have scarcely anybody else as nurses except your secretary Dietrich, yourself, and your worthy wife!"

"Katy!" turning to his wife, and speaking with more than usual earnestness, Luther said, "Katy, are you of the same opinion with Doctor Schurff?"

"No, dear Sir," she replied, with blushing cheeks. "Doctor Schurff thinks this is necessary on your own account; but I at once declared that I would leave the whole matter to your decision. I will not let those suffer who have served me in time of need."

"Now, dear Katy," said Luther, with an animated countenance, "the Lord put it into your heart to speak thus, and I regard it as an additional proof that you are my wife, given to me of God. It appears to me that my disturbed conscience would never allow me to pray again, if I were to drive these poor servants out of my house in this time of their trial and suffering."

The physician did not yet seem satisfied. "But this could be done," he continued, "without burdening your conscience. If they would rather go to the hospital, and there receive good nursing, and if you were to visit them,

and comfort them, and see that they were properly attended to, it appears to me that your conscience might be easy."

"That may all be so!" said Luther. "But our good city of Wittenberg has not too many hospitals for such seasons as this, and it is proper that the poor should first enjoy the benefits of them. No, dear Katy," — he now turned to her — "nothing else will do but that we ourselves must become nurses. I hold on to the words, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself. What ye would have men do unto you, that do ye unto them.'"

"Who can successfully oppose you, Doctor?" exclaimed Schurff, in a tone of profound reverence. "You always strike with the word of God, and that overcomes all resistance."

"The plague does not come without God's permission," continued Luther. "Where such a terrible calamity prevails, there we should remain to help and comfort each other."

"Oh that I had your faith!" exclaimed Veit Dietrich, who had, unobserved, entered the room.

Luther turned kindly to his secretary, and said, "Dear Veit, my faith can be had at a cheap rate; I took it out of the word of God, and this fountain can never be exhausted till the end of time."

The little group assembled in the room were much edified by the discourse which he now delivered to them on the Providence of God, as displayed in the occurrence of the plague, and the duties of Christians in relation to it. He grew more animated as he proceeded, and when he had concluded, he sunk into his chair completely ex-

hausted. His friends, and particularly the Doctor, hastened to him, and anxiously enquired about his feelings.

"Be not alarmed!" he said, smiling, and extended his hand. "I feel well enough. You know what is said, 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'"

Catharine now proceeded to procure him some refreshment, of which he partook, and was soon restored to his usual energy.

"Do not go yet, dear friends," he exclaimed to the company present, as he saw they were making preparations to leave. "Stay awhile! You are going to leave for Jena to-day, and I have so much yet to tell you. I also expect our dear pastor, Dr. Bugenhagen, and his two deacons, and it would please me to have you at our pastoral conference. Partake of this refreshment. And you, Mr. Lieutenant, you must wait until I write a reply to our gracious master, the Elector."

CHAPTER XIX.

PROFITABLE CONVERSATION.

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. — 2 TIM. ii. 1-3.

AFTER Luther and his guests had partaken of the refreshment which Catharine had brought in, he turned to the Lieutenant, and said, "What is your name, my friend?" And when he had announced it as Stephen Arnhold, Luther continued, "Are you a relative of the worthy pastor in Breslau, Doctor John Arnhold?"

"He is my uncle," replied the Lieutenant.

"He is a most worthy man, and you may safely follow his example!" said Luther. "Heaven has richly endowed him with understanding and Christian faith, so that I am surprised he should ever ask advice of me. When you write to him, tell him I have received his letter, and would have answered it long ago, but for my recent severe affliction. The plague has also commenced its ravages in Breslau, and the people there are more disposed to fly than our Wittenbergers. The pastors there have a hard time of it!"

"Yes, harder than soldiers!" replied the Lieutenant, and blushed at the boldness with which he spoke.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Luther.

"Soldiers," continued Arnhold, "in the midst of life are in death; but they can defend themselves, and may conquer their enemies; but pastors who visit those attacked with the plague, are without shield, helmet, or sword, and cannot resist when assailed by the disease."

"Not exactly, young friend!" rejoined Luther. "No man is armed with a stronger helmet or a mightier shield than the pastor; he has the strong promises of God, with which He arms and consoles all who have regard for the suffering and destitute. Do you not remember the Psalm, 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness;' that is, 'Thou wilt make his sick-bed a bed of health.' Are not those glorious promises given in full measure to all those who kindly attend to the suffering and dying? What true believer, with such promises in his hand, can be moved or alarmed?"

"You say rightly, the *true* believer," replied the physician. "The unbeliever is clothed with neither sword, shield, nor helmet. But yet, though I am a physician, I must honestly confess that I more highly honor the courage of a pastor, or other pious friend, who, in times of pestilence, visits and waits on the sick, than that of the physician, who is accustomed to such scenes and service!"

"Do not depreciate yourself more than is necessary,"

said Luther. "I do not wish to see any physician standing at my bed-side who does not fear God, and put more confidence in the heavenly physician than in himself." He continued in the same strain, and enlarged on the duty of serving the sick from the purest and most disinterested motives.

This led the physician to ask, "Do you mean by all this, dear Doctor, that no one should take any remuneration for his services to the sick?"

"Not at all!" replied Luther. "The laborer is worthy of his hire; but mere selfishness should not be our motive. Love to our neighbor should influence us. We should do it in reference to the promises of God; for only there can we expect to enjoy God's deliverance in time of trouble. God Himself will be his nurse and physician. Oh!" continued Luther, whilst his eyes glistened with that glowing lustre which always burst forth from them when his whole soul was filled with God, his Saviour, "O, what a watcher God is! what a physician! Dear friends, what are all physicians, attendants, nurses, to God! Should not that thought inspire us with courage to go to the sick and wait on them, even if an hundred plagues were assailing them! What are all plagues and all devils against God, who here pledges Himself to be our protector and physician! Shame on that wretched unbelief which despises such rich consolation, and allows itself to be more frightened by an inconsiderable and uncertain danger, than to be strengthened by such divine, certain, and faithful promises! Of what consequence would it be, if all the physicians were there, and the whole world were waiting on us, and yet if God were absent? And again, what harm would it be if everybody were to leave us, and the physicians were to flee, if

only God, with His promises, remained with us? Do you not think, dear brethren, that we are then surrounded with thousands of angels who will protect us against the pestilential scourge?"

"Yes," said Melanchthon, "it is written, 'He will give His angels charge over thee, that they may keep thee in all thy ways. They will carry thee on their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.'"

"All right, dear Philip," replied Luther. "You well know what passage is suitable. Hence, dear friends, let us not be so much alarmed, nor abandon those whom we are bound to serve. Let us not fly from these hobgoblins of the devil; for he will rejoice, and God and the angels will be displeased. God will not defend those who desert His cause or His people in time of need. With what measure we mete, it shall be measured unto us."

"My profession," said the physician, "often leads me into the abodes of poverty and misery, where physical destitution is greater than spiritual. The rich and the great always have nurses and attendants in their afflictions; and whether it be for the sake of pay or not, they have the benefit of this service. But before a rich or a great man goes to the sick-bed of the poor, the case must be urgent indeed."

"And how much to be lamented!" added Luther. "I am sure that if Christ himself or His mother were sick of the plague, the rich and the great would willingly wait on them; every one would be bold enough, and would not think of flying. The deluded people! They would do that for Christ, and yet do not hear what this same Christ says, 'What ye do to the least of these my brethren, ye do unto me.' Has He not also said, 'Thou shalt love thy

neighbor as thyself?' He, then, who would serve Christ himself, let him go to his poor, sick neighbor, and serve him; he will certainly find Christ in that man, truly, not according to his person, but in His word. But, if any man is not willing to serve his neighbor, he may be sure that he would also let Christ himself suffer, if He were on earth. Yes, friends! this is a true picture of the human heart, with all its ingratitude and selfishness."

"Dear Sir!" exclaimed Catharine; "may we not also go too far in love to our neighbor, and thereby tempt God rather than trust Him? Do you not think it is proper for us also to think of ourselves?"

"Most certainly, dear Katy!" replied Luther, kindly. "We can sin on the right hand and on the left. He who tempts God, and employs no means whatever to avoid the plague, but laughs, and sings, and plays and says in effect, if God wishes to protect me He can do it without medicine or caution on my part,—he who does this, shows no confidence in God, but sins against Him, for He has put those means of preservation in our hands, and we are bound to use them."

"With the same reason," said Melancthon, "a man might be perfectly unconcerned about food and raiment, and say, if God wishes to protect me against famine and exposure, He can do it without bread and clothes."

"And that is not all," continued Luther. "He who is reckless of his own life, and does not aid in resisting the plague as much as he can, poisons and murders others who probably would not have been attacked, if he had taken proper care of himself, as he should have done. Such persons are precisely like those who would not help to extinguish a house on fire, even though the whole town

were in danger, but would say, If God wishes to save the house or town, He can do it without water, and, therefore, we will let the conflagration rage. We must not act thus, dear Katy, but you must use the medicine which Doctor Augustine gives you as a preventive; do all you can; fumigate the house, yard and cellar, and do not enter the room of your sick servants until they actually need your presence."

A pause ensued here, which Doctor Schurff interrupted by saying, "Some of our people are displaying most culpable thoughtlessness and superstition; who, in my opinion, sin more heinously than those who abandon their neighbors in distress. There are some who have recovered from the disease, and though they know that, by their breath and exhalations, they may infect others, still they mingle among the people, and spread the contagion. But these are not the worst; there are some who have caught the disease, and who seek the society of their neighbors, fondle children, and try to come as near as possible to others, under the foolish impression that if they can infect others they will get rid of the disease themselves. Yes, I have even heard it said of some, that they are so desperately wicked, that when attacked they go into the houses of others, and come in close contact with the people, because they are mad that others have escaped, and from pure, unmitigated depravity and envy, they strive to spread the plague as far as possible."

"I do not know whether I shall believe that!" exclaimed Luther, in amazement. "If what you say is true, I am not certain whether we Germans are human beings or devils; and my advice would be, that such persons should be handed over to the hangman as murderers. For what

are such men but assassins in the city? really, it would be much better to live among wild beasts than with such people. I do not know how to preach to such murderers; they pay no regard to the word. I would recommend the government to deliver such miscreants, not to the physician, but to the executioner."

"I wish it were so," said the physician. "The plague would not have raged so fearfully here in Wittenberg, if superstition, neglect and ungodly behavior, had not spread the poison among the people, for the atmosphere is fresh and pure."

"As you are speaking of it," continued Luther, "there is another thing which the government should attend to. I mean, that graveyards should not be allowed in the city. I cannot conceive how this custom ever arose. Christ himself was buried out of the city; and Abraham bought a burying-place in the field of the cave, and, hence, not in the midst of the city; but we want it nearer and better than Abraham and Christ himself."

And Luther continued in a strain of impassioned eloquence, to dilate on this theme. He showed that necessity, decency, honor and devotion required public cemeteries to be removed from the noise and confusion of a city, and thus demonstrated that remarkably progressive spirit so far in advance of his age, which characterized all his actions.

Just as he had finished his discourse, Doctor Bugenhagen and the two deacons entered, who were politely saluted by all present. Catharine and Doctor Schurff left the room. As the Lieutenant was about to do the same, Luther said, "Have a little more patience, and take some refreshment, which my wife will prepare for you.

By that time you shall have an answer for His Electoral Grace."

"Most reverend Doctor," said the messenger, "I have the answer already."

"How is that, my friend?" asked Luther, amazed.

"You have permitted me," replied Arnhold, "to remain here, and may heaven reward you for the rich consolation which you have imparted to me. From your conversation I have gathered your answer to our gracious master. You will not go to Jena, but remain here in Wittenberg. And if all abandon their sick neighbors, you will stay and take care of them. Ah! dear Doctor, you alone are more than all we together."

"Be cautious how you speak, young man," replied Luther, with an amiable earnestness. "Do you not know how Peter spake to his master: 'If all should be offended at thee, yet will I not be offended; and if I were compelled to die with thee, yet would I not deny thee!' And how Peter kept his promise, you also know; yet I am not worthy to unloose the sandals of this Peter! But go, my friend, and partake of what my dear wife shall set before you."

When Arnhold had left the room, Luther thus addressed the assembled friends and brethren: "Although every faithful pastor is sufficiently instructed in the Scriptures how to feed and defend the flock, yet it is well for pastors to consult together on the most efficient method of discharging their onerous and perilous duties in these extraordinary times which Providence has brought upon us. Hence, I have thought it well to call you together here, in these days of the Lord's severe visitation, that we might exchange views in a kind and fraternal spirit as to the

course we should pursue. The whole city is looking to us ministers of God, and we must see well to it that we do not come short of our duty. Dear Doctor Bugenhagen, you as the pastor of the city church should first express your sentiments on this important matter."

The minister thus replied: "Venerable Doctor, I have come in company with my two colleagues, not so much to consult with you as to receive your advice. It is true, we know that you esteem yourself so low as to be rather willing to hear and learn than teach; but we also know that God has enlightened your mind with his truth far above all others; so that no one is so deeply grounded in the knowledge of the word and will of God as you. We therefore entreat you, dear Sir, to give us your opinion; and be assured that we among ourselves have made a solemn vow to continue the discharge of our duties as long as a single soul remains needing our help, and we escape the pestilence."

"I could not expect anything else from you!" replied Luther. "And now, dear brethren, hear my vow also. I will share with you labor and trouble, danger and suffering, life and death. And though I cheerfully communicate my opinion on this subject, yet I will yield to your better judgment. The first thing that we preachers have to attend to more particularly in those times, is to admonish the people in every possible way to be diligent in their attendance at church, that they may learn from God's word how to live and die. You know that yesterday I preached on this subject. I advise a *daily* public service in the church as long as the plague lasts."

"Certainly, dear Doctor!" said Bugenhagen. "That is just what we have done; and we have the pleasure of

informing you that a large congregation assembles every day. We have not, however, been satisfied with preaching in the church, but have gone from house to house, exhorting the people."

"But you must make a difference!" added Luther. "Where you hear that a pious person has been attacked with the plague, go to him without delay, even if you are not called; for you will always be welcome. But there are many who are so coarse and thoughtless, that they despise God's word as long as they live. My advice is that you trouble not yourselves with them."

"But if they should desire to see us?" asked the pastor.

"Then, of course, go!" replied Luther, "but ascertain whether they sincerely repent of their sins. Grace is full and faith is free; and he who will not go to the house of God only exercises his own liberty. But he who will live as a heathen or a beast, or has thus lived and gives no evidence of repentance, must not be admitted to the Lord's Supper, nor classed among the number of Christians. Such a one may die as he has lived; and let himself see to it how he will stand before God."

"And can we be guiltless in this case?" asked one of the deacons.

"We take our stand on God's word!" replied Luther, firmly and decisively. "We dare not cast pearls before swine. We dare not give that which is holy to dogs! that is our Lord's command. What else can we do? There are so many obdurate sinners who, neither living nor dying, have any anxiety about their souls,—what else can we do?"

"Yes, you are right, dear Doctor, and it is to be deeply

lamented," said Bugenhagen. "But we preachers also find even among those who do come to church, and do not despise God's word, many poor souls who know well enough how to provide for the things of this life, but who have made no preparation for eternity. When death comes they are alarmed, and have no hope whatever. Ah! this is hard work for a minister!"

"And frequently fruitless work and trouble!" added Luther. "My advice is that you try to save all who can be saved, and constantly remind them of death and eternity. Preach it in the market-places, in the streets, and from the house-tops, that all should prepare themselves for death."

"And how can that be done by the people in the best way?" enquired the second deacon.

"Let them confess their sins," answered Luther. "That is the first step. Confession will drive them to the law; the law will infuse the fear of God; the fear of God will lead to the gospel of grace in Christ. Teach them diligently the whole counsel of God respecting our salvation, and a frequent and prayerful use of the means of grace; let them be reconciled with their neighbors, and arrange their worldly affairs; so that, when death knocks at the door, they may not be taken unprepared, but ready to commend their souls to God, and die in peace."

"We pray for grace to discharge these duties faithfully!" said Bugenhagen. "But when mortality prevails to such a fearful extent as at present, we three or four ministers are too few to attend to all who desire our services."

"And hence," replied Luther, "and hence the more urgent necessity of teaching them how to die whilst they are yet in health. You cannot establish a regular pulpit

and altar in every sick-chamber. No, dear brethren, they who despise the gospel to which God calls men in general, must bear their own responsibility; and you, who preach that gospel faithfully, are free."

The first deacon here modestly stated the following case: "Yesterday I was called in to a sick man in great haste, to give him the sacrament. I found him dying; he was unable to speak, and gave no evidence of recognizing me, or any one in the room. Although those present urged me vehemently to give him the sacrament, yet I refused; for I knew that he could not discern the Lord's body, and I would not abuse the blessed ordinance. He died whilst I was there, and then his friends accused me of neglecting my ministerial duties. My conscience has since been somewhat troubled about it, and I am not certain whether I did right or not."

"You did perfectly right, dear brother!" replied Luther, firmly and decisively. "The papistical priests have done in such cases what the deluded people have wished, and have even forced the sacrament into the mouth of the dying, just as we thrust bread into a bag. May God preserve us from thus sinning against the body of the Lord! He who can no longer be asked whether he confesses himself to be a poor, lost sinner, before God; whether he feels true contrition; whether he believes in the forgiveness of his sins for Christ's sake; or he who cannot give any reply to such questions, should not be allowed to receive the sacrament."

"It often happens," observed Bugenhagen, "that we are called in when the sick are already in the struggles of death."

"But we dare not act otherwise!" responded Luther.

"I know well that not a few are so indifferent about their salvation during health, that they only call in the minister when they are about dying. I know too, that their friends come and beg, 'Dear Sir, only say something good to him in all haste, and give him the sacrament, even if he is scarcely conscious!' The simple people! When they are first attacked, they do not want the minister, and say, 'There's no necessity to call him; I hope to be better soon!' What shall a faithful pastor do with such people, who are indifferent about body and soul, and die like brutes? Shall he, in a great hurry, preach the gospel to them, when they neither hear nor understand it? No: I say, dear brethren, no! We must hold fast to this, never to preach or give the sacraments to a man who can show no sign of understanding or believing them, especially when we know that he has wilfully neglected them; for we are commanded not to administer the sacrament to unbelievers, but to believers who have the ability to understand and profess their faith."

Turning to Melancthon and Jonas, Luther continued, "Dear brethren! the care of souls is not committed to you as it is to us preachers; but you still stand with us on the same foundation of faith and hope. Tell me, do you agree with us in the views that we preachers and pastors have just expressed?"

"You have already expressed our sentiments, dear Doctor!" replied Melancthon. "We stand with you on the same foundation of faith and hope; and I hold that we dare not sin against the faith out of false love to our neighbor. I adhere to the declaration of St. Paul, 'If we live, we live to the Lord; if we die, we die to the Lord.' He who has not lived to the Lord until his dying hour, cannot die in the Lord."

"That is also my opinion!" affirmed Jonas; "for no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself."

"All that is certainly true!" continued Luther. "You are now going to Jena, not for the purpose of fleeing from the plague here, but in respectful obedience to your Electoral master. Do not forget, dear brethren, that the bodily plague, terrible as it is, and yet may be, is yet of small account to the spiritual plague, which destroys soul and body at the same time. I beseech you, for Christ's sake, to help us with fervent prayers and earnest teaching, to remove this spiritual pestilence with which Satan has poisoned the world. Help us also by teaching and writing to counteract the pestilential influence of the despisers of the sacraments and other factions; for it is not our cause, but Christ's."

"I have no fear of our cause," said Melancthon. "No one has ever removed the rock, which is Christ, from its place, but it has destroyed every one who has fallen on it. The Lord will yet rather save than destroy—He will rather gather than scatter abroad, and will also call near those who are yet afar off."

"But do not interpret the signs of the times too favorably for our cause!" observed Luther. "It is very evident that Satan is incensed at us and our cause; he feels, perhaps, that the day of Christ is breaking over himself and his kingdom; hence, he raves so furiously. I am beginning to fear that a dreadful calamity is impending over Germany, when I see so many pious Christians, and faithful ministers removed from us by the plague and other casualties; but, perhaps, the Lord is taking them to Himself, that they may not be corrupted by the ungodly."

"You remember," said Melanchthon, "the language of Isaiah, 'The righteous are taken from the evil to come;' but do you not think, dear Doctor Martin, that we should console ourselves with the words of the Apostle: 'I am confident that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'"

"Most certainly, dear Philip!" replied Luther, and expatiated on the sentiment in an animated and eloquent strain. He at length stopped short, and added: "But, dear friends and brethren, the time of our separation has arrived. If it please God, we shall all meet again in health and peace. Pursue the course which the Lord has pointed out to you, and leave me remain in my present position. May Christ, our Lord and Saviour, preserve you and us all in the true faith and brotherly love unblamably, to the day of His coming. Amen!"

All present heartily responded amen, and each cordially extended to the other his hand.

"Pray for me, a poor sinner," said Luther, finally, with a heart full of emotion, and then retired to his chamber.

CHAPTER XX.

AFFLICTION, REPENTANCE, RECONCILIATION AND FAITH.

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved; for Thou art my praise. — JER. xvii. 14.

THE plague, which at first demanded but few victims, and these among the poorer inhabitants of the city, now began to stretch its greedy arms towards the more elevated and wealthy classes; and this induced the magistracy to employ the most active preventive measures. Those houses in which it raged were fenced off, and all intercourse with them forbidden. Fumigation of every sort was applied in the houses, and even in the streets. The occupants of houses were ordered to report every case of plague, and at once to separate the patient from all others; to air their beds and clothes, and purify them by fire. No persons besides pastors were allowed to enter an infected house without the most urgent necessity, and all intercourse with the convalescent was forbidden, because their exhalations were considered the most dangerous.

But with all this precaution, the magistracy could not and would not forbid the gathering of the people in the house of God. Divine service was performed every day, and multitudes desired to receive the Lord's Supper.

Margaret Homberg still resided with Kranach. His house had as yet escaped the plague, although he, as a chief civil officer, was obliged to expose himself to the infection every day.

Margaret had just concluded the usual morning worship with the children of her Protector, when she was startled by the entrance of Leonard and her sister Catharine. Her nicely discriminating ear, and, above all, her sympathizing heart, immediately recognized her sister before the latter had uttered a word; but, of course, she could not observe the change in her features and person.

"It is I, Margaret!" said she, and advancing towards her sister, grasped her hand. "And Leonard is with me, also," she continued. "How are you, dear sister?"

"Ah! how happy you make me!" replied Margaret. "You cannot conceive how that tender tone of your language penetrates my heart. I have not seen you for so long, and yet daily and hourly have I sighed after you. Catharine, speak on! let me hear more words of affection from you. I have longed for them many months."

"Margaret," now continued her sister, "do you remember what you said on a certain evening: 'If you only knew *Him*, the *only One*, who does not wound but heals!' I did not understand you then. But I know *Him* now, and it is *He* who brings me to you this day. I now come, dear sister, and say to you, O! forgive the injuries I have done you! for He will not pardon me until you have done so!"

"You hesitate!" she observed, as her sister did not immediately reply. "Is it hard for you, Margaret?"

"O, let me enjoy my happiness to the full!" exclaimed the blind girl. "I hesitate because I have no language

to express the exultation of my heart. Catharine, is it possible? tell me again that it is *He* who has brought you to me!"

"Is it He," asked Catharine, "when I say of Him, He alone can save my soul? Is it He, when I now know that I am the dumb one who was to speak, and the blind one who was to see? Is it He, Margaret, when I tell you that now the burden of my prayer is, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me? Is it He, Sister," she continued, though her utterance was almost choked with emotion; "is it He, when I acknowledge that He alone receives sinners, and that in this confession lies all my hope? Is it He, do you think, now?"

Margaret did not reply. Hot tears coursed their way over her cheeks, glowing with holy ecstasy, and falling on the neck of her sister, she wept aloud.

"I knew — I knew it would come to this at last," she finally said. "O, thou true and faithful Lord and Shepherd, I knew Thou wouldst give Thyself no rest until Thou hadst found this straying sheep of Thy flock. Ah! how could I ever deserve such exquisite pleasure!"

And then she again drew her sister to her heart, and gently glided her hand over her face, as if she would, by the sense of feeling, recognize her features, and know certainly whether it was Catharine, really, who stood before her. But she was alarmed when, instead of the round, fresh fulness of face, she felt hollow cheeks and prominent bones, and exclaimed, "Catharine, it is your voice I hear; it is the soft luxuriance of your beautiful hair I feel, but your face has changed; your hands have become thin; your arm is lean and lank; have you been sick again, dear sister?"

"I have been, and, perhaps, am yet," she answered, calmly. "But let not that disturb you; I am happy, and do not think of my body."

"Leonard," said Margaret, turning to the young man, "why did you not tell me all this?"

"I dared not," he answered; "Catharine made me promise to keep this second sickness a secret from you."

"And could you do that?" she asked, with a tone of tender reproof. "Did you not regard me worthy of nursing you?"

"It was not that," replied Catharine. "I knew that the sickness would not be unto death, although in my folly I wished to die. But I had vowed not to see you until I could meet you without malice or ill-will. When I made this vow, I did not know that I could not fulfil it of my own strength. Foolish girl that I was; I did not know that all enmity towards our fellow-men can only then be taken away when our enmity against God is removed. Now only do I know, that *He* alone, who was so long a mystery between me and you and Leonard; that *He*, whose name I knew, but in whom I did not believe; that *He* alone can reconcile all differences. Margaret, since I have Him, I know that I have everything. But—" interrupting herself, "though I wish to speak only of Him, yet we will postpone it to some other time. I hear the bell of St. Augustine church, which calls together the weary and heavy laden. I have prepared myself to partake of the Lord's Supper to-day, for the first time since my religious views and feelings have changed. I come to you, dear Margaret, and beseech you to forgive my faults. Think of my spiritual blindness, and pardon the injury I have done you. I meant to do you harm, but

God has turned it all to good. Will you forgive me, Margaret?"

"Dear, faithful soul!" said Margaret, profoundly moved. "When I first heard Luther say, there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, I thought that must be the happiness of the redeemed when they hear of the conversion of loved ones whom they left unsaved on earth. Now, Catharine, the cup of my happiness is full here below already. The angels in heaven cannot rejoice more over a repenting sinner than I rejoice at your love to the Lord, in knowing now that we both, nourished by the same mother, are now one in Christ Jesus!"

"Then you have forgiven all the wrong I have ever done you?" asked the sister.

Margaret laid both her hands on her breast, and solemnly said, "My inmost soul answers, yes; and yet I dare not say it."

"You dare not?" exclaimed Catharine, and slowly moved her head to and fro.

"I dare not!" repeated the blind girl. "If I utter the *yes* which you wish to hear, I hold judgment over you, and the Lord alone is Judge."

"You *also* dare judge," continued Catharine. "I have sinned against you, and have fallen under your condemnation. Dare you not acknowledge that I have done you unspeakable injury, when I, whose heart and conscience are burdened with it, hold this judgment over myself."

"For that very reason I dare not judge," said Margaret. "Do you not remember the words of the gospel, 'If we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged?' But, as you insist on it, I will freely declare what I intended to conceal from you. Catharine, do you know *when* my soul

longed after the Lord?—*when* I sought a comforter in my troubles?"

"Since Luther has preached the gospel in Wittenberg!" replied Catharine.

"Father Luther," rejoined Margaret, "was only the instrument in the hands of the Lord. Luther was the earthly, visible physician, to whom the physician in heaven directed me. No, Catharine, I began to seek the Lord from that moment when I distinctly perceived that the heart of my father and sister had no room for my love. It was the gracious and wonderful Providence of God that at that very time Luther preached from the words of David, '*When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.*' Then I thought, my mother is dead, and my father and sister are also dead for me, and hence I can take this consolation to myself. And with this one thought, my whole heart was opened to the Lord. From that moment, my faith grew like the mustard-seed, and——"

Now, for the first time, Margaret observed from the silent weeping of Catharine, that her language had deeply wounded the heart of her poor sister. She drew her to her bosom, and said, "Catharine, you now see what you have done, and to what you have driven me. Do not weep—I did not intend to hurt your feelings. I wished only to tell you that I had no fault in you to forgive, because you, with our father, were the cause of my being led to the Lord. Catharine, dear sister, forgive me; do not weep!"

"I do not weep on your account, but on my own," responded Catharine. "Alas! how deeply I had fallen! and yet I was not aware of it."

"And yet how has the Lord raised you up," added Margaret, with a joyful heart. "I herein recognize the exceeding grace of God, that He then only allows us to experience the depth of our fall when we are raised up, or rather when we are ascending the height. If we had a full view of our degradation when we are enveloped by the darkness of our folly and blindness, we would despair."

"But, dear Margaret," asked Leonard, "is not this full view of our misery necessary to compel us to look upward? Did not Father Luther recently say, that our Lord associated more frequently with publicans and sinners than with other people, for this reason only, that the greatest sinners are sooner converted than those who regard themselves as righteous before God?"

"Certainly, Leonard," she replied. "But my own experience teaches me that in this respect the mercy of God towards us is wonderful. You are perhaps thinking of that fear of God's wrath and judgment which is awakened in us at once, and which impels us to seek His favor. But this fear, just because it is fear, conceals from us a full view into the depth of our heart. Just as we experience the grace of God only by degrees, thus we also experience by degrees only the misery which our sins have brought on us. Yea, the more clear my views are of the unspeakable glory to which the Lord designs to elevate me, the more vivid are my conceptions of the degradation out of which the hand of the Lord has plucked me."

"Yes, it must be so!" said Catharine, deeply moved by the words of her sister. "When God, by sickness and mortal agony, by the destruction of all my hopes and confidence in my own good works, had so deeply cast me

down, that, for the first time in my life, I was without comfort, or help, or counsel; I felt nothing but fear and trembling in view of the judgment of Him who can destroy body and soul in hell. At that time, you, Leonard, came to me, and exclaimed, '*Christ alone can save from sin!*' I took up those words as one condemned to death receives the declaration of reprieve. I now felt a happy trembling hope that I should not be lost. I did not know how great or how small my guilt was before God; I only felt that it pressed me down to earth, and that, as I believed in Christ, it was removed. That was but a few days ago; but since then my view becomes more distinct every hour. That which but yesterday seemed laudable and proper in my past life, I to-day feel to have been nothing but the outgrowings of a proud heart and perverted mind. That which I yesterday thought could be justified before God, to-day I feel to be already condemned. And if the consciousness of my guilt did not keep equal pace with the consciousness of the grace extended to me, I would often despair."

"Sister!" exclaimed Margaret, "how did you acquire such a rich abundance of Christian truth? tell me how you found the Lord."

"How can *you* ask that of *me!*" replied Catharine. "You could tell that to me, dear Margaret, for you understand the secret life of the soul better than we all. You wish to know *how* I found the Lord? Well, Margaret, I *found Him* just when I had *lost everything else.*"

"Do you remember, Leonard," she continued, as both stood before her deeply moved; "do you remember when you spoke to me of the heated iron, that I should not immerse it into cold water but into oil? I then did not under-

stand a word you said, but now I know what you meant. Leonard," she suddenly added, with unusual excitement, "I believe the oil is not yet mild enough—it does not soothe—it burns."

"For heaven's sake, what ails you?" exclaimed he, in great alarm, as he saw her face suddenly assuming a leaden color.

"I am chilled!" said Catharine, and every limb of her body shook violently. "I feel a heavy weight on my head which is crushing me. I am very tired! Oh, pity me; I am already unhappy enough!" And she began to weep.

Leonard conducted her to a large arm-chair, whilst Margaret, as hastily as she could, repaired to Kranach's family-room to call for help.

"How do you feel now, dear Catharine?" asked the young man, as he moved back the luxuriant locks of hair which the deep inclination of her head had caused to cover her face.

"I am very sad," she feebly replied. "Give me one word of comfort, Leonard. You have so often cast me down, now help me up."

"You deceive yourself, Catharine!" he rejoined, with deepest sympathy. "Have you not but a few moments ago elevated and strengthened us both by the power of your own faith? how is it possible that you could so soon become so disconsolate?"

"I have deceived you both," she continued, whilst she shuddered in every limb. "There is no comfort for me. A withered tree no one can restore."

"Not even He?" asked Leonard.

She shook her head, and answered, "No, not even He.

He could, but He will not, at least not to me. No one can help me ; I am lost !”

Kranach and his wife, accompanied by Margaret, now entered the room. When he approached nearer, he was alarmed, but soon recovered himself, and as calmly as possible spoke to the sick lady. “Miss Catharine, you are not altogether well ; it would be better for you to be in bed. We will have you conveyed home. There is a sedan-chair near at hand.”

Catharine cast a look of the most painful anxiety on Kranach, and replied : “Will you not allow me to take a little rest in your house ? You have received my sister Margaret very kindly ! But you are right ; I do not deserve your kindness. The *rejected* one finds another home, but I, who drove her out of her father’s house, can find no rest. Did not God forbid men to furnish a shelter to the fratricide Cain ? I am fallen under the condemnation of God !”

“Dear sister !” exclaimed Margaret, in a beseeching tone ; “how can you utter such dreadful words ! Do you not know that all which has happened is forgotten and forgiven ? Are we not all ready to serve you in your need ! I will accompany you to our father’s house !”

“Yes, that *you* can do !” said Catharine. “I cannot — I dare not ! You are innocent, and bring a blessing into the house of cursing ; but I, the guilty one, have there no longer a home. I will tell it only to you,” she continued, in an under tone of dread ; “*I am afraid of my father. He cannot love us both together. My time is past, and now you take my place in his heart. You could bear his curse, for it fell on an innocent head. I cannot bear it. Go, Margaret, and leave me here. But before you go,*

give me a drink of water ; a consuming fire burns within me."

Whilst Kranach's wife hastened to procure the water, and Margaret had bent over her sister and gently laid her hand on her brow, Kranach took Leonard aside and said, "Young man, this is a dangerous case ; let me tell you that this lady is attacked with the plague. Do all in your power to have her removed to her father's house as soon as possible. Think of my wife and children."

"Is it possible !" exclaimed Leonard ; "is it really so ? are you not mistaken ?"

"Would to heaven I were !" he replied. "All the circumstances plainly indicate it. The sudden weariness ; the depression of the head ; the leaden color ; the chill ; the raging thirst ; the deep dejection of heart, all show plainly the beginning of the plague. It is yet possible to convey her home without danger ; it is even possible that in a few hours she may appear better ; but be not deceived. The danger is imminent ! very few recover !"

"Then she must die ?" said Leonard, enquiringly.

"An Almighty and gracious God can deliver even from the greatest extremity !" replied Kranach. "But do not neglect the hour in which human help may yet avail."

When the mistress now returned with a cup of water, and Catharine had received it from Margaret's hand and drank it, she suddenly rose from her seat, and said, "Oh ! that has done me good ! my strength is returning ! Come, Leonard, conduct me to the house of God, to the altar of the Lord."

"Are you really strong enough for that effort ?" enquired the young man. "Would it not be better for you

to go home? You know you can partake of the Lord's Supper in your father's house."

"And you, Leonard?" exclaimed Catharine, with painful emotion, "you have done me so much evil, will you not for once also do me some good? Leonard——"

"O, dear sister," said he, "how can you entertain such an idea? I am now only anxious about your bodily welfare, when I beseech you to return home, that you may be there properly cared for. Obey me this time, Catharine."

But she shook her head, and replied, "No! I dare not go home before I have received the Holy Sacrament. Leonard, you do not know what I have suffered on your account; do me a favor now, I beg you, and conduct me to the table of the Lord."

"You hesitate!" she continued, as Leonard, in his anxiety, really did not know what to do. "Leonard, if I die before I have partaken of the Sacrament, I will accuse you before God. If you refuse to go with me, I will go myself. The merciful God will surely send some merciful soul to lift me up, if I should sink to the earth on my way to God's house."

"Well, then," said the young man, "let us venture it in the name of the Lord. Come, Catharine, I will go with you to the altar of the Lord."

"O, do not go without me!" entreated Margaret, with tears. "Come, sister," she continued, and threw her arms around Catharine's neck. "Now we are both happy in hope and faith. In this kiss take the half of my soul, and for it give me yours; and, in token of our love and fidelity to the Lord, take me with you to the house of God. The Lord will bless our covenant by the holy communion of His body and blood."

Speechless, but still most impressively speaking by their tears of holy joy, the sisters continued in warm embrace; and Leonard and the two others looked on with deep emotion, and silent, fervent prayer.

The three now left the hospitable house of Kranach, amid many hearty salutations and thanks. Leonard supported the blind girl on his left arm, and offered his right to Catharine. She, however, refused it, and attempted to walk unsupported. Soon her strength failed.

"Poor man!" said she to Leonard, with a painful smile; "I did not want to be burdensome to you, but the hand of the Lord is stronger than I." And she then leaned so heavily on his arm that he could scarcely proceed in an upright posture. Her step became gradually slower; her respiration more difficult and painful.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "the judgment would be too severe, if I could not reach the house of God! Leonard, can you not support me by the other arm?"

That was impossible; but Margaret might also aid him. She left Leonard's arm, and, going round to the other side, supported her exhausted sister with her utmost strength. Finally, they arrived at the steps of the house of God. Catharine now sank down completely overcome, and, seated on the steps, she said, "I can go no farther! Almighty God, let me not famish here at the very fountain. Pray for me, Leonard and Margaret. The Lord will hear your prayers, and not mine. O Lord," she continued, herself praying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! Let me not perish so near thy mercy-seat!"

She continued thus earnestly and fervently for a minute, pouring out her heart's intense emotions in the most impressive language. All of a sudden she ceased, and

exclaimed to her companions, "Now come! help me up! I feel better. Come, before it is too late."

And really, with the help of both, she rose, and, at a slow pace, entered the sanctuary of God. A great multitude had assembled there, preparing themselves to receive the Lord's Supper.

In accordance with the custom of those early days of the Reformation, and still prevalent in some sections of the church, she kneeled before Bugenhagen, who, with his deacons, was hearing the confessions of the communicants. Leonard and Margaret stood a few paces distant, but she beckoned them to her, and said, "You shall hear what I have to confess!" and they both kneeled beside her.

"Venerable Father!" she now began, with renewed feverish excitement—"Venerable Father! I am a great sinner—no greater one has ever made a confession to you. My mother grieved herself to death on my account, because I despised her commands, and I did not love—I could not, because she loved my sister! My father is insane, and I am the cause of it. I drove my sister away from the house, because she was loved by him who hated me. My whole life has been sinful in thought, word, and deed. The Lord would have delivered me in love, but I would not; it was necessary first to make me feel most awfully wretched, and to show me the profound abyss on the brink of which I stood, before I cried unto Him, 'Lord, help me!' Tell me, venerable Father, can I yet be saved?"

"Are you really and sincerely sorry for your sins?" asked Bugenhagen.

"Oh, Sir! words cannot express the deep regret of my soul at having thus deliberately offended my God."

“And do you believe that in Christ and through Christ your sins may be forgiven?”

“Yes, I believe it! If this hope deceives me, then I am the most unhappy of beings.”

“And will you trust in the Lord Jesus alone for redemption, casting aside all confidence in your own works and righteousness, and receive the word of the Lord as uttered by me?”

“Yes, Sir! For a long time, in the pride of my heart, I despised you and your gospel; but now I know that you are a true and faithful servant of the Lord.”

And now, with deep emotion, the venerable pastor recited the words of absolution to her and her two friends, after they also had confessed their sins, and declared their faith in Christ as the only Mediator and Redeemer.

As Bugenhagen immediately recognized the ill-health of Catharine, and properly feared that too long a delay would totally exhaust her feeble frame, he directed that these three should first approach the table of the Lord, and then immediately leave the church.

When Catharine, led by Margaret and Leonard, advanced to the altar and received the Sacrament, tears flowed plentifully from her eyes; but still a smile, the evidence of her now happy heart, lighted up her face. And when they retired as far as the vestibule of the church, Catharine fell on the neck of her sister, and said, “Margaret, now I also know that my Redeemer liveth. He will raise me up from the grave, and I shall be where you are, and where He is! Now, go with me to our father’s house. Now, I can look him in the face, and pray with and for him. You, Leonard, must also come. You

both shall be witnesses of what I intend to do. Come, quick. My strength will soon be exhausted."

The three now proceeded to Homberg's house, which they only reached after much difficulty. Catharine could not ascend the stairs. Leonard gently lifted her up in his arms, and conveyed her to a bed. When he looked round for Margaret, she was not there. He quickly descended, and found her still standing on the steps of the front door. "Margaret!" he exclaimed, "will you not come in? Catharine requires immediate help. Go up and take the maid-servant with you, and I will go for the Doctor."

"Only go, Leonard," she replied. "Be not anxious about me! I shall do all I can. Go, Leonard; for Catharine's sake, do not delay any longer."

"Margaret!" said he, and grasped her hand, "the Lord protect you! I must now tell you what you do not yet know; Catharine is attacked by the plague. Go and nurse your sister, as the Lord has commanded it; but think also of me! Your life is mine!"

He left the house in haste, and Margaret thus soliloquized: "I surely thought that my father would be standing at the door to meet me, press me to his heart, and change his curse into a blessing. But my thoughts are not God's thoughts, nor my ways His ways. Yet this I know, He doeth all things well. In thy name, Lord, and under thy holy protection, I will again enter this house."

And she now found the well-known way to Catharine's chamber, and faithfully attended to the directions of Leonard.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PLAGUE AND DEATH.

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. — 1 Cor. xv. 26.

EVERYTHING was done to relieve Catharine. Doctor Schurff exerted all his skill, and found willing and industrious attendants in Leonard, Margaret, and the servants, who faithfully followed his directions. With all their confidence in God, yet they were not altogether free from anxiety about themselves. It required a constant renewal of their courage and trust in Providence, by fervent prayer, to sustain themselves, whilst they were thus directly exposed to this contagious disease.

In Homberg's house there was only one who was free from all care and anxiety, but also at the same time totally destitute of all the hope and consolation which the Christian faith inspires. It was the master of the house himself, who, though for some time restored to bodily health, was yet wholly bereft of reason. But he was perfectly harmless, and injured no one. He often worked in his shop, beginning this, and then that, and finishing nothing. He conversed with nearly all who approached him, but in such a manner as though it were always one and the same person, and that was Urban, the friend of his youth. He ate and drank as usual, and even seemed to enjoy some

happy hours, but his mind was dark and bewildered. He forgot that he had been a husband and father; he thought he was no longer in Wittenberg, but in Augsburg; he was no longer an old man, but a young, robust apprentice, before whom the earthly future still lay untried.

It was only occasionally, when Leonard mentioned one name, which vibrated on the innermost chords of his heart, that the full consciousness flashed for a moment in his eyes, but he soon relapsed into his usual idiotic insensibility.

But let us approach the sick-bed of Catharine.

She lay incapable of motion, her arms reposing helplessly by her side. She complained again of the chill, which penetrated her very soul, — of a deathlike lassitude in all her limbs, and particularly of a leaden heaviness of the head, which crushed her. The chill soon passed off, but there immediately ensued a heat which constantly augmented, and seemed to consume her very vitals.

“Give me water!” she exclaimed, incessantly. “Take care, the flames will soon burst out of my body. Leonard, reach the cup to me, — let me drink as you give water to an infant. It seems to me as though that drop only which you give me soothes this burning pain. Leonard, you are Lazarus, and I am the rich man in hell. Ah! dip the tip of your finger in the water, and cool my lips, my tongue!”

“Dear, dear Catharine,” said Leonard, and laid his hand upon her burning brow; “we poor mortals can do nothing more than pray for you, and direct you to the cross of Christ, that you may submit to the chastisement of the Lord like a true and faithful servant. Tell me, Catharine, is your mind at peace? are you reconciled to God, and satisfied with your allotment?”

“I must be so!” she replied, while tears trickled from her eyes, and profound grief was impressed on every feature of her face. “Leonard,” she continued, “I know that I shall die; I do not murmur against God; it is good for me to die; my earthly career ends at the proper time, when all my earthly hopes are blasted. He who has nothing to hope for on earth should regard death as a blessing. Leonard, I do not wish to die before you are acquainted with the secret of my heart. As I now love the Lord with all my soul, and mind, and strength, so, Leonard, have I loved *you* from the very first moment you entered our house. But my love for you was sinful, because it compelled me to hate my sister. Hence, all this subsequent wretchedness of body and soul. You shall hear it; I am dying on your account. My disappointment at not being able to gain your affections has gnawed at my heart. You were the occasion of my first attack of sickness; and then I wished to die because I foolishly thought my death would grieve you; but the Lord mercifully spared me. You are the cause of this second attack, from which I shall not recover, though I ardently desire it.”

“Catharine, stop!” exclaimed Leonard, deeply agitated. “Spare me! do you not feel that you are laying a burden on me which must crush me. Will you die condemning me?”

“Deluded man!” she responded, with a bitter smile. “Do you not feel that my heart still clings to you? Be calm. I do not condemn you, but myself; my own weak, foolish heart; the darkness of my understanding; the pride of my whole life, which have brought all this upon me. If you had not entered our house, I would have remained in that condition of darkness until my end. You

subdued my proud spirit. I could not bear to see you love my sister, whom I despised. I was mistress in my father's house, and imperiously ruled all its inmates. I could mention a number of persons who sued for my hand, but I despised them all, because I felt that I could rule them, and, with sarcastic scorn, I directed these suitors to my blind sister. You came, Leonard. When I saw you, I said to myself, he is the only man whom you will consent to submit to! My pride was broken, and with it my heart also, for you did not love me. Leonard," she continued, "during that period of my hopeless love for you, there is no curse and no blessing which, in the silence of my heart, I did not wish for you. When father expelled Margaret from home, I indeed trembled with sympathy for the poor girl; but when I thought that this blow on Margaret's head would also strike *you*, I was satisfied. Leonard, am I not insane to make this confession to you? But, believe me, though humiliating, it affords me relief. I now know that the Lord has humbled me, and on this depends my hope in God's pardoning grace. Leonard, now I know that I could not have been rescued from sin but by the deepest humiliation of my proud heart."

"Catharine," said he, "if I ever offended you by my language, it was because I was heartily grieved about your spiritual state. I never hated you. I would have made any sacrifice for your real happiness. Believe me, Catharine, I spoke to you thus because I really loved you!"

"It is well that you tell me that now for the first time!" replied she, with a melancholy smile. "At an earlier period I would not have believed it, or would not have understood it rightly. Call Margaret!" she suddenly ex-

claimed. "The fire within me begins to burn again, and I cannot endure it long. I feel that I am losing my senses. What I intend to do must be done now. Is Margaret here?"

Leonard had led Margaret out of an adjacent chamber, and stood with her at the bed-side of the sick sister.

"Come nearer!" entreated she. "I want to bless you, but I cannot raise my hands. Lay your hands on mine."

And when they had done that, she continued: "Margaret, from your lips I first heard the Scripture words, 'He that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' Behold, dear sister, the Lord has fulfilled His word. He has brought me down to the dust from the pinnacle of my pride, and He has exalted you from your humiliation. I acknowledge the justice of it all. I thank God that He is a righteous Judge, and yet a merciful Father. Margaret, as I once looked down contemptuously upon you, I now look humbly up to you. I regarded you as the curse of our house, and behold, you are its blessing. You are the instrument of rescuing me, and you will yet rescue our unhappy father. You have been my servant on earth; I will be yours in the kingdom of God, if I, through mercy, am permitted to enter it. Be the happy wife of this man, the only one on earth who ever, as a man, humbled my pride. Kiss me, if you are not afraid of one who is dying; kiss me, as a sign that you are reconciled with me!"

"Reconciled in the Lord, and through the Lord," said Margaret, and laid her head on the bosom of her sister, whilst Leonard's tears fell on her emaciated face.

"She is dying!" he suddenly cried out. "Catharine, stay with us yet! we have so much to say to you!"

But Catharine did not hear. Her eyes were closed; her

respiration was scarcely perceptible; she gave every sign of approaching dissolution. At this moment, the physician, Dr. Schurff, entered.

"You are too late!" said Leonard.

"Would to heaven it were so!" he replied, after he had for a moment examined her condition. "She would then have escaped the terrible agony that yet awaits her. The worst is to come. She is only fainting now, and will soon wake up to undergo the last and severest struggle. Pray the Lord that her sufferings may be short; for there is no hope of recovery."

And, as the physician predicted, so it was. Catharine opened her eyes, but it was evident that reason had fled, and death was at hand. Her eyes at one time glowed with an unnatural lustre, and rolled wildly about from side to side; and then again, they were dead and fixed. Her cheeks fell in to the very bones, and were covered with an ashen hue. The bosom heaved in violent throes; the body that a while ago lay motionless, was now terribly convulsed; and, as if seized by unseen hands, it was forcibly thrust from one side of the bed to the other. Then, again, ensued a perfect exhaustion, and the stillness and insensibility of death.

After the lapse of some time, the apparently dead body moved again; the eyes glistened fearfully; an insane smile played on the features of the face. With a great effort she opened her lips, and repeated a few verses of a favorite song, and then in a hollow, sepulchral tone, she muttered some unintelligible words. A faint motion of her hands intimated a desire to elevate or extend them; but they lay like lead by her side.

Then her delirious smile changed into an expression of

delirious pain; all the features of her face assumed an extraordinary aspect. Agony, alarm, despair, were all depicted in fearful impressiveness on every muscle.

"Put out the fire!" shrieked the unhappy girl, with a convulsive effort. "Do you not see it! the whole house is on fire; the burning timbers are falling on me! Do not let me burn! I will confess everything! I have committed murder and robbery; I have beaten my father and mother; I have poisoned Margaret; I have given my soul to Satan. Holy Mary! he is now coming to take me! - No, no!"

And now, although poor Catharine until then could not move a limb of her body, she raised herself up; and, before any one could prevent it, threw herself violently to the other end of the bed.

"For God's sake!" she now exclaimed, in a momentary lucid interval, "let me creep like a worm on the earth, that you may tread on me. Water, water! throw me into the Elbe! my whole body is burning! Oh, pity me; I can no longer endure these tortures of hell!"

After she had been restored to her former position with great difficulty and trouble, a cup of water was held to her lips, for she could not control a single muscle. She emptied the cup to the very last drop, and again shrieked, "Water! water!"

"Give her what she wants!" said the physician, as those present, with loud weeping, enquired of him what they should do. "I can do nothing more!"

"Then she is lost?" asked Leonard.

"There is yet one hope!" replied Doctor Schurff. "If, in the course of half an hour, the body should become red, and carbuncles should form as outlets of the pestilential

matter, it is possible! but only possible!" he repeated. "The issue is in God's hand; and I must confess that this is one of the severest attacks, and there are few persons who recover from such."

The patient continued to cry for water; but, though it was plentifully administered, yet it seemed to afford no relief. Her strength was soon exhausted, and, unable to express herself, she gave every sign possible of her inextinguishable longing for the cooling beverage. Her tongue lay between her teeth, dark-red, like a burning coal, and motionless.

"Almighty, merciful God!" exclaimed Margaret; and, falling on her knees, buried her face in the bed, and thus inhaled the pestilential effluvium from the body of her sick sister.

"Do not tempt God!" said the physician. "Rise up, Margaret! let this one victim be enough! You are not doing what is right!"

"I will die with my sister!" she replied, with unusual excitement. "What is life to me, when she is no longer with me!"

"Rise up!" commanded the doctor a second time. "You sin against God by persisting in your purpose. I beg you, for Christ's sake, rise and leave the room."

"Do you demand that of me?" she exclaimed, still more highly excited. "Do you think that a sister's love will allow itself to be controlled by human authority?"

"But you can render no service whatever," rejoined the doctor, as mildly as possible.

"You do not know that!" responded Margaret, in a tone of violence. "I know as well as you, that in this house there will be but one victim; but do you know who that victim is?"

"I think that the Lord has plainly enough indicated that!" said Doctor Schurff, and pointed to the unhappy Catharine.

Margaret smiled almost contemptuously, and continued: "Are you also one of those who wish to fathom the inscrutable designs of God! or to prescribe a course of action to the Almighty? When I tell you that my sister will recover, and that I will be the only victim, have you the courage to say to me, 'You are mistaken?'"

Margaret then grasped the hand of her sister, and covered it with kisses and tears. "You shall not die, Catharine!" she exclaimed. "As long as I can weep, I will soothe the pains of your body with my tears."

The physician took Leonard to one side, and said, "Margaret is in a state of dangerous excitement. I know you have influence over her; I beg you, for heaven's sake, do all in your power to remove her from this chamber. If she will not consent, employ force. I cannot allow her to remain here any longer!"

But, before Leonard could obey the orders of the physician, Margaret was compelled by Catharine herself to withdraw from the bed. She was again attacked with delirium, which approximated to raving madness. She sprang up, threw her arms violently about her, as though engaged in some dreadful conflict. She uttered unintelligible sounds; and wild, fierce glances, shot from her deeply-sunken eyes, creating alarm and despair in all present. She then sank back again on her bed completely overcome; and nothing but a painful and long uninterrupted respiration gave signs of life.

"The first conflict is over!" said the doctor. "Look at her neck, under the chin, and here on her arms, and

there — do you see the white, black, yellowish, burning blisters? See here! that is the plague in its second crisis! God be merciful to the poor girl!”

“Do you see now?” exclaimed Margaret, in impassioned, almost delirious joy. “Do you see? Catharine is not the victim; she will be saved! You have said, Doctor Schurff, that if the blisters are formed, my sister will recover. I tell you, Catharine is not the victim. I shall be the victim! It must be so!”

“Margaret, dear, dear Margaret!” now said Fichtner, and seized her with both hands; “you know that the Lord controls life and death according to His good pleasure. You have often told me that the Christian should neither pray for life nor death. But what are you doing? You wish to die, and yet you do not know whether it is God’s will. Come, Margaret, you are in a high state of excitement; your hands burn like fire. Come with me!”

But she shook her head, and said, “You have told me, Leonard, that you loved me. Does that show your love when you desire me to abandon my sister in her greatest need?”

“You are not abandoning her!” replied he. “You know that your sister has lost her reason; she neither hears nor sees your sighs and tears. You can do nothing for her here. That which you can do better than we all, can be more profitably done in your chamber. Pray there for your poor sister! Spare yourself! Think of the words of our Lord, ‘Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.’ If He desires you for a victim, He will find you. Margaret, have you forgotten that *your* life is *mine*?”

She still stood undetermined, and sunk in profound deliberation, when the door opened and *Martin Luther* entered the room.

"You have a dying person in this house!" said he. "It is thus reported in the street." He then advanced towards the bed, and started back in horror at the dreadful sight.

"Doctor Augustine," he thus addressed the physician, "is there any hope?"

"Very little, venerable Sir," he replied. "If the blisters do not soon suppurate, she will certainly die. But," he continued, whispering to Luther, "the Lord has sent you here; I beg of you to induce that blind girl, who is the sister of this dying patient, to leave the room; she persists in remaining here. Her mind is in a dangerous state of excitement. If she does not soon go out into the fresh air, and take some nourishment besides, we shall have a second victim."

"The Lord has already provided!" said Luther, and turning to her, thus spoke: "Why, this is my dear Margaret!" and he familiarly took her hand.

When Margaret had at first recognized the voice of Luther, she felt an agreeable surprise; but when the dear, good man stood so near her, and she felt the pressure of his hand, her heart was filled with love and veneration. Her knees trembled; she sank down, and pressing the hem of his gown to her lips, exclaimed, "Oh! man of God, the only proper place for me is here, at your feet!"

Luther earnestly shook his head, grasped her with both hands, and, in a solemn tone, uttered these words: "Margaret, there is but One before whom every knee must bow. Be cautious lest you deny Christ. Rise up, and take away from me and yourself the sin of breaking the first commandment."

"You are displeased with me!" said Margaret, rising, and much dejected in heart.

"No, my daughter!" replied Luther, kindly. "I only wish to remind you that the Canaanitish woman did not fall at the feet of the disciples, but only at Christ's. But what are you doing here, Margaret? You can be of no service here. God alone can help, and He will hear you when you call on Him. Master Lucas Kranach has been with me. His dear child, Ursula, is sick with fever, and she desires you to come and pray with her. Mr. Fichtner will conduct you to Kranach's house. Go then, Margaret, and learn anew that the children of God always have the dear angels as their friends and servants."

"Bless me, my father!" entreated Margaret, and again fell on her knees before him. "My heart is exceedingly dejected that I am compelled to be separated from my sister."

"Go in peace, my daughter!" said Luther, laying his hand on her head. "Let not gloom settle on your heart; it weakens our faith, and interferes with our communion with God. Go, and learn what God means when He says, 'I have pleasure in mercy and not in sacrifice.' The Lord bless you, and keep you."

Margaret rose, and, with silence and resignation, left the room with Leonard.

In the mean time, Catharine lay rather composed, but the plague had made fearful progress. Fungous blisters, and pustules of a blackish-yellow color, covered her whole body. Her face, with the exception of the forehead and cheeks, presented a series of tumid, hard, shining carbuncles. None of her friends would have recognized her, so altered was her appearance. A blackish-blue, half-liquid mucus flowed from the mouth and nostrils.

The unfortunate girl was destined to suffer all the hor-

rors of this terrible disease. Although her language was unintelligible, yet her loud, desperate groans and cries demonstrated that she was conscious of intense agony.

"What hope have you now?" asked Luther of the physician.

"None in the least now!" he replied. "The crisis has passed; not one of the blisters will suppurate; they all remain hard as stone. Yes," he continued, after having cast a searching look on the patient, "death has already begun his work. We can do nothing more than to pray God that she may have a speedy dissolution."

Luther now advanced towards her, and laying his hand on her burning brow, asked, "Catharine Homberg, do you know me?"

She opened her eyes and stared round wildly. Gradually, the half-delirious, piercing look assumed a milder character, and then gave place to an expression of indescribable suffering. When Luther had repeated the question, she opened her lips and uttered an unearthly sound, which, however, was manifestly designed to indicate an affirmative answer.

"Catharine," continued Luther, "are you prepared to die? and do you desire to be saved only by the merits of your Redeemer, Jesus Christ?"

The dying girl uttered the same startling, unintelligible tone, and endeavored to elevate her voice, as though she wished to throw her whole soul into the reply. But, as she manifestly observed that her language was not understood, she made a feeble sign with her hand. Luther caught her meaning, and laid his right hand in hers, notwithstanding it was covered with blackish-yellow sores. He felt a slight pressure, — the response of her heart to the words of her lips.

"And are you willing to die?" asked Luther. Do you rejoice in the prospect of entering into the glory of your Lord?"

A clear beam of holy joy shot through her eyes, and expended itself in a look towards heaven.

"Well, then, my daughter," said Luther, with a heart full of glad emotion, "then be comforted and resigned. We will pray with you!"

He threw himself on his knees at the bed-side, whilst the physician, with folded hands, and in silent devotion, fixed his eye on the dying girl.

Luther offered one of those soul-stirring, heart-edifying, and fervent prayers, which seemed to penetrate the very heavens, and would, as it were, take no denial. He pleaded as one who was familiar at a throne of heavenly grace—as a man talketh with his brother.

The physician, though fervently participating in the intercession for the sufferer, still thought that she would die before Luther had pronounced his amen. The patient lay like one dead, with half-closed eyes and open mouth.

"Is she dead?" asked Luther, when he had risen and looked upon her.

"As near dead as possible!" replied the physician. "It is possible that her soul may yet linger in leaving the tenement of clay."

Suddenly there were heard loud and heavy footsteps, and before Doctor Schurff could hasten out and command silence for the dying, the door opened, and Homberg himself entered. He gazed around like one may be supposed, who, after a night of darkness, is suddenly restored to sight. One while he looked at the physician, then at Luther, then at the sick-bed, and betrayed a constantly increasing inquietude. Then he approached the bed, and

when he discerned his dying daughter, it seemed as though the scales fell from his eyes. He grasped his head with both his hands—he cast despairing looks on all around—and then exclaimed, in tones of unspeakable agony, ‘For heaven’s sake! what’s all this? What are you doing here? Who is this woman lying here?’

The old man, full of torturing anguish, then threw himself on the bed, embraced the dying daughter in his arms, and said, “Catharine, is it really you? I adjure you by Heaven, answer me!”

And, behold, that countenance, just now apparently fixed in death, was again lighted up with life; the eye-lids opened; an indescribable lustre shot forth from them; a joyous smile played on her face; her lips parted; and feebly, but distinctly and intelligibly, she spoke, “Father——Margaret——Christ alone!”

And scarcely had these words escaped her lips, when the smile vanished, the eyes closed, a deep, sepulchral rattle issued from her throat, a convulsive shake of the head, and—all was over.

“Blessed be Thou, O thou faithful God!” thus prayed Luther; nor did the venerable man restrain the tears which freely bedewed his cheeks. “Let me also once depart in peace, and in dying behold thy glory, as this young woman has done!”

When Homberg observed what had occurred, he steadfastly fixed his eye on his deceased daughter; and at length, as if in dark despair, he said, “Judgment has come! God be merciful to me a sinner!”

Luther turned to the physician, and said, “Do something for the body of this man. The hour is near when I may be called on to do something for his soul.” And with silent steps, he left the room.

CHAPTER XXII.

NIGHT BEFORE DAY.

Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

THE sudden and terrible death of Catharine agitated the mind of the unhappy father to the highest degree. The profound gloom which had hitherto hung upon his spirit like a heavy pall, was all at once dispelled. He felt himself disenthralled from that bondage; and yet, at the same time, a distinct view into the depth of his corrupt heart and burdened conscience, was opened to him.

The physician was compelled to drag him away by force from the death-bed of his child; for neither entreaty, warning, nor argument, would influence him. He tore his hair, and wept and cried incessantly in the height of his despair, "Catharine, my child, my daughter!"

When the corpse was removed from the house, to be buried as quickly as possible, agreeably to the order of the magistracy, he violently tried to prevent it, until the physician and Leonard succeeded in forcing him from the room. He paid no regard to their expostulations, but continued to exclaim, in piercing tones of agony, "Give me back my child again!"

He spent the greater part of the day in the room in which Catharine had died. He paced to and fro with

quicken steps, one while muttering to himself, and then giving himself up to the silent tortures of his conscience. "It is not possible!" he repeatedly exclaimed. "She cannot be dead! She was my dearest child; she has always been so robust and cheerful; she was to have waited on me when I die, and now they have carried her away!"

"O God, is it possible!" he continued, as though seized with a violent shudder. "Something dreadful has happened! A crime! I did not even know that she was sick, and was going to die! I could not even pray for her! Oh! what terrible darkness enshrouds me! Something must have happened to drive me to despair and impair my memory. I feel distinctly that I have spent a portion of my life in unconsciousness! O Lord God, preserve my reason! I feel that I shall lose it! Gloomy shadows are settling on my soul; they expand themselves like ravenous hands ready to grasp me."

"I must be sick," said he, proceeding in his soliloquy. "Yes, surely I must be sick, and perhaps I shall die. Catharine will come for me, and take me to her own grave! and yet, alas! I do not want to die yet. I have a great deal to do before I can die. Oh! that I had peace of mind!"

Although Margaret now lived in the house with him, yet that seemed to make no impression on the mind of the father. It is true, he did not avoid her presence, but he gave no evidence of regard for her; and when it accidentally happened that he approached her more nearly than usual, he turned away from her as if alarmed, and spoke not a word to her.

Margaret deeply felt the painful impression which her

presence made upon her father; hence she sought to avoid all intercourse with him; and though she bitterly lamented this treatment on his part, yet she cheerfully endured it in the hope of a favorable change. "It cannot be otherwise!" she would comfort herself by saying; "the time will come when he shall be reconciled, and call me his daughter; and I will wait in patience."

Leonard was the only one in the house with whom Homberg held any intercourse; but on terms very different from those of former times. Not that the old master treated him kindly, (for he always trembled when his eyes fell on the young man,) but that he no longer showed that contemptuous sneer and disdainful scowl with which he had before always met him. Neither did Homberg converse with him on his personal affairs, nor on his art, but on foreign, indifferent subjects, which had no reference to the state of his mind, nor to any domestic events.

Things thus continued three days. On the morning of the fourth day, Margaret waited in vain for the entrance of her father into the family-room, in which he usually took his morning meal. Full of apprehension, she called Leonard out of the workshop, and entreated him to see after her father. "I do not fear anything wrong," said she, "but still something may have happened requiring help!"

Leonard entered softly into the chamber, and saw the old master lying in his bed. "Are you sick, master Homberg?" asked Leonard, in a tone of cordial anxiety.

"I shall most probably be sick!" replied he, hesitatingly. "True, I feel no pain; but I am so tired, and my mind is so dejected. Leonard, do you know anything about diseases? Tell me, am I really sick? Look at me; do you think I shall die?"

"Not just now, certainly," answered the young man, with strong assurance. "I know very little about this matter, but I believe you are more melancholy than really sick. Shall I go for Doctor Schurff?"

"No, no!" said he, hastily. "What can the physician do for me! He could not save my child, who was yet young, and how can he help an old man?"

"But," said Leonard, interrupting him, "frequently a physician's aid is of service to all, if it is called in at a proper time; but, when it is delayed, nothing can be done!"

"Not another word about that man!" exclaimed Homberg, violently. "I know that he can do me no good! If he restores my child to life again, then I shall believe him."

Immediately he became perfectly calm, and almost in a supplicating tone, he said, "Leonard, do not think hard of my violent reply. I did not intend to hurt your feelings. Come nearer, I wish to put a question to you."

When Leonard had advanced towards him, Homberg fixed a steadfast gaze on his face, but he soon cast down his eyes, and then said, "So, you do not believe that I shall die! Tell me candidly, Leonard! I am not a child; I am a man, and have had much experience. I could tell you things which would make your hair stand on end! so, conceal nothing from me! If it is all over with me, why, so let it be. I am an upright man, and have done much good, and can go to my grave in peace. You think that I fear death! O no! in the grave there is rest, and I require much, much rest. No, Leonard, I am not afraid."

Deluded man! his look, his whole deportment, betrayed

the lie. The tremulous voice; the restive motion of his hands and head, all displayed the strongest fear of death.

"You are deceiving me," continued Homberg, as Leonard did not immediately answer him. "You do understand the nature of the disease, but you will not tell me. You observe it, that I cannot live long. Do tell me! can you go my security that I shall not die now!"

"What are you asking of me, a poor mortal?" replied the young man. "The Lord of life and death alone knows that. No man on earth can secure your life one hour. But allow me, in all kindness, to say, that if your last hour were really come, I do not think you are prepared for it. A Christian should always be ready for his death. Take care that you do not comfort yourself with a false hope. In death, all self-deception is at an end."

"Now you are speaking plainly enough," said Homberg, in painful haste. "You know that my hour is near at hand, but you want to spare me the alarm. Go, Leonard, you are not better than others. Go, go, why do you remain here yet; do you wish to steal away the hours that I have yet to live? If I am to die, I want no witnesses present. Go, I do not stand in need of your help! Yes, I am not at all sick! I will show you that I am well and strong! I will rise and go to work!"

He made an attempt to rise, but he fell back helpless on his bed. Heavy drops of tears flowed from his eyes.

"You are cruel, Leonard!" he said now. "You should sympathize with me, but you mock my sufferings. If you know what could help me, do tell me. I will obey you!"

"Oh!" exclaimed the young man, "how hard it is for you to believe that I really feel a deep Christian sympathy for you! There is in this house but one other person who

loves you more than I do, and yet I hardly think that possible."

"Not a word about that!" rejoined Homberg, anxiously desiring to change the subject. "Do not deny it to me, Leonard. I tell you, I will confide in you. Only tell me what can be of service to me now. I am not so poor as you suppose. I will tell only you, that I have saved several thousand guilders: I will tell you where I have buried them. I can pay you for everything you do for me."

"Well then," replied Leonard, "if you insist on it, I will tell you how you may obtain help. True, you will not consent to my going for the physician, but I will tell you that there is but one who can do you any good, and he is *Doctor Martin Luther!*"

No sooner had Leonard uttered this name, than Homberg almost screamed out, "No, no! never! I am a faithful son of my church, and I will not fall into the hands of this heretic! If you can give me no better advice, you may go!"

This ungracious repulse so saddened the young man, that he lost all courage to say anything further to the sick man. Not so much in obedience to the command of Homberg as to consult with Margaret what was to be done in the present state of things, he turned his back and slowly left the room. He had scarcely reached the first step of the stairs, when he heard Homberg loudly and vehemently calling his name. He hastened back and enquired what he wanted.

"You are displeased, Leonard," said he. "You are going, though you well know that I did not intend it so seriously. Tell me—you mentioned the name of the master heretic, who lives here in Wittenberg. Among much

that is bad, I have also heard some good of him. They say that he is very severe, and has very little sympathy with the sick and dying, and that his words are like poisonous arrows."

"Who gave you such a report of that dear man of God?" asked Leonard. "Believe me, dear Sir, the man who spoke thus of Doctor Martin, had no regard for him nor for you. The whole population of Wittenberg follows him, and with them the half of Christendom on earth. Do you think that all these have so little regard for the peace of their minds as to allow themselves to be pierced with poisonous arrows from Luther's lips? And do you know who prepared your Catharine for death, so that she died happy and rejoicing? This same Martin Luther, whom you despise as a heretic."

"If I only knew that he would deal gently with me!" exclaimed Homberg, uneasily. "Look you, Leonard," he continued, "I have cheerfully and diligently gone to confession, and highly appreciated absolution, and have faithfully performed all the penances which were imposed on me for the atonement of my sins. You can go to him and tell him that; and, moreover, that naturally I am of a timid disposition, and that he must not speak too severely with me. Only tell him," he continued, more earnestly, "all that I have suffered ever since you came here, and that I have lost my child, and that he must sympathize with me. Do you not think, Leonard, that he will deal gently with me, if you tell him all this?"

"How you deceive yourself with regard to this man!" replied Leonard. "You are afraid of his person and of his words! Do you not know that Luther does not speak of himself, but that he takes everything from the word of

God, whether it be doctrine, rebuke, or consolation? But I shall tell him what you have enjoined on me."

As Leonard was about to leave the room, Homberg loudly called after him, "Stop a little longer; it is not necessary that he should come to-day. Perhaps I shall get better! To-morrow, Leonard, or the day after."

"To-morrow or the day after!" repeated the young man, sadly. "Do you certainly know that you will yet have any time for this work to-morrow or the day after? You say there is no necessity for it to-day. I have always thought that the sooner the heart was at peace with God, the more happy it would be."

"What, then, do you wish?" exclaimed Homberg, vehemently. "Do you think I am so great a sinner, and that I have no peace with God? I should like to know what you can accuse me of? What evil do you know of me? Tell me plainly! But you are right," he continued, with a sudden change of his tone. "I am much more sick than I thought, and if I can be helped to-day, it is better than to-morrow. Go, then, for Doctor Schurff, and if you should by chance see the other doctor, him, — him, — I mean, who lives in the monastery, — if you should accidentally meet him, — well, — if he were to visit me, I would not exactly prevent him!"

Leonard, whose heart trembled at the disconsolate, distracted condition of the unhappy man's mind, thought it advisable to go to Father Luther without any further delay, and immediately left the room and descended the stairs, although Homberg again called him back. Luther was ready to go with him at once, and on the way Leonard briefly repeated what he had previously communicated to him about Homberg. But Luther remembered everything

very distinctly. He soon arrived at the chamber of the sick man.

As soon as Homberg saw the man whom he appeared to fear as his judge, he was visibly alarmed, and turned away his eyes from him. But Luther was not discouraged by such an unkind reception. He advanced towards him, extended his hand, and familiarly said, "God be with you, master Homberg!"

The old man responded to the salutation in a low mutter, and reached forth his hand, so slowly and heavily as if he were not able to raise it from the bed.

"You are sick!" continued Luther, seating himself in a chair by the bed, and taking such a position that he could look him fully in the face. "Sickness is a heavy burden, which most men must bear; and it is well to bear it patiently. What ails you, dear Sir? Have you severe pains, or is your complaint rather bodily infirmity?"

"Infirmity, infirmity!" replied Homberg, reluctantly.

"And how long is it since you have felt this weakness?" asked Luther. "I mean," he continued, in the gentlest manner, when the sick man looked at him as though he did not know what to say, or as though he did not understand the question — "I mean, is it long since you felt so weak, and have been obliged to remain in bed?"

"Long, long!" replied Homberg; and immediately added, "I have been sick longer than I have been in bed; for a terrible misfortune has happened to me. I have lost my dear child, and I have also lost my wife; and, besides that, I have had a sad time of it in the world. When I was ten years old, my father and mother died, and I have had to struggle hard from my childhood up, and there are few persons on earth who have suffered greater hardships than I."

"And how have you endured it all?" asked Luther, gratified that the sick man had at least begun to speak.

"How have I endured it?" exclaimed Homberg. "I have always lived uprightly, and I should like to know the man who could say any evil of me. I understand my business, and can prove by letters, that I have worked honestly. I am not an avaricious man, and have made no charge for work done for many a poor village church; and besides, I have helped along many a poor journeyman. About fifteen years ago, one came to me, and I gave him clothes, and money, and food; and I have the letter yet which he wrote to me from Nuremberg, thanking me for all my kindness to him. But you shall read the letter yourself!"

"My dear Sir!" responded Luther, when he saw Homberg raising himself up in his bed, and reaching towards a small cupboard by his side, "what is all that to me? I do not doubt the truth of what you have said. But that is not what I wish to know from you. You have said that during your lifetime you have had many sad and evil days, and then I asked how you bore them; silently and patiently, or with a murmuring and discontented heart?"

"What do you mean by '*evil days*'?" asked Homberg, suddenly and harshly.

"Evil days," replied Luther, calmly, "are those which are accompanied by corporal and mental suffering, and trials of various kinds, which we sometimes think cannot be endured, and which tempt us to despair; and they are properly called evil days, because they often leave much evil behind them, and lead to evil."

"I have had much experience in my life," replied Homberg, evading the subject, and regarding Luther with a sullen, angry look.

"And has your experience proved a blessing to you?" asked the latter.

"Yes, yes," said the sick man. "It has indeed been severe, but God has blessed me in my profession. True, I am a poor man now, but I have never wanted for food, raiment, and shelter. I also had many friends, but many of them have died. If they were living, they could bear the most flattering testimony to my character. They once wanted me to accept of a civil office in Wittenberg, but I would not consent. Ten or twelve years ago, I was very sick, and suffered much pain. Yes, Sir, my experience in life has been very hard; and there are few who have suffered more than I have."

"And are you sorry that you have suffered so much?" enquired Luther, who was resolved to catch and hold the sick man fast by using his own words as far as possible.

"No," said Homberg; "I am Christian enough to know that the best sort of people always suffer the most; and that is also my consolation in my present weak condition. I hope also that it will not last long."

"Heaven grant that!" responded Luther; "and yet I would advise you not to depend too securely on that. You may be deceived. Many a thing which seems light and unimportant may turn out to be very severe and protracted."

"Sir, what do you mean by that?" exclaimed Homberg, quite alarmed. "Do you think that I am suffering from the plague? I know that my child died of it! Sir, tell me that, if you think so, that I may send for the doctor. You look at me so doubtfully. I am not afraid of death, but I should like to live a few years longer, not on my own but on Margaret's account. I have yet one child, a

blind child, which would be entirely forsaken, were I to die. And to tell you alone, dear Sir, as long as Catharine lived,—yes, what was I about to say?—yes, when I seriously think of it, I have perhaps—poor blind Margaret—I was going to say, as Margaret is blind, so—Ah, Sir, excuse me; my thoughts are confused, and my mind is disturbed——. Sir, do you think I shall die of the plague?"

"Unhappy man!" sighed Luther, "as far as I can judge of the matter, you are yet free from the disease; but if your mind does not soon become calm, it is very likely you will be attacked. Master Homberg!" continued Luther, confidently, "you are truly sick and weak in body, but much more so in mind. The heart is relieved when the mouth speaks. Every man has said or done this or that thing in his life which is most deeply impressed on his mind, and which he never forgets. Tell me what it is which disturbs your mind, and, as an honest man, I will never betray your confidence."

Homberg, tortured by conflicting emotions, cast anxious looks all around, and exerted himself to calm the tumult of his heart; but he could not succeed. He finally said, "You may be right, dear Sir; something happened to me once, which I can never forget, much as I desire to do so. It is about thirty years ago, when I worked in Italy, and the last place was Milan, and there something occurred which I have never been able since to get out of my mind. I have tried everything, yet it still follows me; but you can well believe, dear Sir, that I am innocent. You do not believe me? You look at me so doubtingly?"

"I am only waiting to hear you tell it!" replied Luther, calmly. "Collect your thoughts, and be composed, and

let me repeat the assurance that I shall not betray your confidence. I am a servant of God, and am called to the office of comforting distressed souls and binding up broken hearts; so, you may confide in me!"

"Well, then," resumed Homberg, "you see that Leonardo Pinetta had become displeased with me on account of a young lady, and would not consent that a poor German artist should find more favor with her than he, and hence he gave out that he was betrothed to her, that with this lie he might ruin my prospects and wound my feelings. And because Maria was devoted to me, Pinetta became enraged, and lurked after me to take my life. I defended myself, and God knows how it happened, but I came out of the conflict unhurt, whilst Pinetta lay dead on the spot. See, dear Sir, that is all, and I could console myself with the reflection that I acted in self-defence; and who can be responsible for the issue of such a rencontre? Is it not so, Sir? I am not to blame!"

Luther was deeply pained at the fearful anxiety with which the man sought to cover his crime with the mantle of innocence. But, well acquainted with the human heart, he knew that the natural man will cling to his self-righteousness as long as possible; and, in order to silence the accusing voice of conscience, will, by false grounds of comfort and feigned arguments for justification, be led to regard this affected self-deception as truth. Luther saw distinctly that it would require the most faithful and skilful treatment to rouse the hardened conscience of his patient, and to dispel his false grounds of consolation. He was glad that Homberg had begun to converse rather freely, and calculating with certainty that if he could only gain an entrance to his heart, it would soon overflow with

contrition and confession, he resolved not to employ the language of severity and threat, but rather gradually and in all kindness and gentleness, to draw from him a full acknowledgment of his guilt.

"I need not tell you, dear sir," he now continued, "that innocence needs no comfort. St. Paul says, 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience;' and before his accusers, in the Council at Jerusalem, he began his defence in these words: 'Men and brethren, I have walked before God in all good conscience to this day!' And in his epistle to the Hebrews, he writes, 'For we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.'"

"And with this he was consoled and contented. A good conscience makes the heart happy and imparts peace. You must know best, dear Sir, whether it is with you as it was with St. Paul. You ask me whether you are to blame;—now, what do you say to yourself?"

"I am innocent!" replied Homberg, quickly; but immediately continued, "In one thing it is possible I may have erred. The people said that Pinetta was betrothed to Maria; but I do not believe it,—and even if it had been so, I would yet be innocent."

"Still, still, Master Homberg!" affirmed Luther, "if the lady were really betrothed to Pinetta, you would not be altogether innocent. Marriage is God's ordinance and law; and when two persons have vowed to each other, they have subjected themselves to God's ordinance, and may be certain of His blessing. Now, if another interferes, he separates that which God has bound together and sanctified,—for betrothal and marriage are equally binding before God. Betrothal among us never occurs without the approbation and consent of parents, and the blessing of

the father and mother rests upon the betrothed. Now, he who interferes, seeks to take away this blessing, and bring it to nought. If, then, Pinetta and the lady were really engaged to be married, and you were aware of the fact, you did wrong in wishing to separate hearts bound together before God, and blessed by the parents. Dear Sir, do not deceive yourself. If you wish to attain to peace of mind, you must lay aside all false security, and must not seek to comfort yourself by groundless arguments. All this will be of no service to you. If your consolation is baseless, it will not endure, and you will continue to be unhappy!"

"Yes!" said Homberg, and looked around restlessly. "You cannot believe how unhappy I have been, and I cannot get rid of it. Would it indeed be a sin, if I had known that they were betrothed?"

"Most certainly!" Luther assured him. "You may probably have heard what our Lord says in regard to impure desires and carnal affections, and I will read it to you,"—and he took from his pocket a Latin New Testament, and translated it into German as he read the passage.

"And could this sin be forgiven, if I had committed it?" anxiously asked Homberg.

"Yes!" replied the man of God "If you really and sincerely acknowledge it as a sin before God, heartily lament it, and humbly long after God's grace; it will be forgiven."

"Well," continued Homberg eagerly, and with a conscience somewhat relieved. "When I rightly consider it, it is very likely that the report of their betrothal was true."

"That is not an open, honest confession, dear Sir," rejoined Luther with gentle earnestness. "If you knew that Pinetta was betrothed to the lady whom you desired,

confess it openly, or you will have no peace of mind. I do not want you to confess to me, but to the omniscient God; and it is not I who can give you peace, but God in and through His word!"

The old man threw a glance at Luther, which implored his sympathy; but as he knew the Reformer's unbending will and incorruptible fidelity, he uttered a faint sigh and said, "Yes, I will confess! *I knew it!* But she was so beautiful, and she had completely captivated my heart. I knew she loved me more than Pinetta; was it a sin, then, to rejoice in her preference for me, and to gain her for myself?"

"Master Homberg!" exclaimed Luther with unusual earnestness. "You are not aware of the charge you bring against the lady by such language. You now wish to transfer the sin which you have confessed, to her, as though she had misled you. If this is really so, you make her to be nothing but a common, faithless woman, who breaks her solemn pledges, and who engages herself to a man she does not love,—who sports with the blessing of her parents and the word of God, and rejoices in the sorrows of her betrothed. Master Homberg," continued Luther still more earnestly, "you do not know how you dishonor yourself by such language. No honorable man will try to win the affections of a woman engaged to another. He does not know what genuine, honest love is, and must have already in anticipation consoled himself for the act by presuming that she would soon place her affections on a third or a fourth. Have you thought of all this, Master Homberg? Was the young lady really such a common woman, who to-day could betroth herself to one man, and to-morrow look after another?"

Homberg continued silent for a while, during which he was evidently tormented with conflicting thoughts. Finally, looking at Luther almost reproachfully, he said, "The people are right! Your language is severe, and it pierces and cuts the heart. You take pleasure in making out men to be sinners; the tortures of an awakened conscience delight you."

"Poor man!" exclaimed Luther with the most sincere sympathy. "I have also experienced the tortures of an awakened conscience, and have felt the burden of unpardoned sin; but because I also know, God be praised, the happiness of pardoned guilt, I bless this torment, because, by the grace and mercy of God, it is the prelude to a happy peace. But how little you know of me, and the word on which I found my doctrine! The number of enemies and opponents who would gladly silence me, and put me out of the way, is great, and they are powerful; and the sufferings they have already occasioned me, no one can describe. But this you may believe, I do not wish for my most bitter and unrelenting opponents the agony of a heart lacerated by sin and unreconciled with God. But let me tell you, dear Sir, what it is you do not like in me. On the authority of God's word, I reprove that act as a *sin* which you for so many years have regarded as an *innocent* act. You are displeased with me, just as if I took pleasure in your misery,—when the truth is, that I am seeking your peace of mind. Answer me, now," he continued in a gentle tone. "I wish to ask you a question. Did that lady distinctly tell you that she loved you more than her betrothed?"

"No, not exactly that!" replied Homberg, with hesitation.

"Well then, did she ever intimate it to you by her looks

or behavior? or did she do anything else from which you could infallibly draw the conclusion?"

"She always treated me very kindly!" said Homberg. "She always spoke so gently to me. She never, in a single instance, wounded my feelings, neither by look or word. Oh! Sir," he continued, "she was an amiable, excellent creature: I never could look on her without trembling to my very soul. And when I said she never hurt my feelings, I did not tell the truth. With every look she wounded me. Oh, yes, Sir, she occasioned me many and agonizing pains."

"My friend!" rejoined Luther, "you have not answered my question. I well know what you mean. I can easily conceive the wretchedness occasioned by your vain and passionate desire to obtain what you knew belonged to another. But that is not what I asked. Was she one who could trifle with a man's affections; who disregarded her own reputation; who could play the coquette with several persons at the same time; was she impudent and immodest — bold and unfeminine? Say, was this her character?"

Before Luther had finished, Homberg had half raised himself up, and, for a moment, regarded Luther with angry looks: he now violently exclaimed, "Sir, what are you talking about! Maria Barchi was an angel in form and purity! You could as well charge the Holy Virgin with unchastity as her. Her very looks were innocence; her behavior and words were as spotless as those of a saint; how could you conceive thus of this model of moral perfection?"

"Well then," said Luther, with solemn dignity, "you, Master Homberg, *you are the sinner alone! You knew*

that she was betrothed to another; *you knew* that she was incapable of being unfaithful even in thought; but you have persecuted her with your sinful passion; you sought to separate her heart from that of her dearest friend; you tried to dis sever the bonds which God and man had blessed; you were the wicked enemy who wished to sow tares among the wheat; your heart and conscience are stained, and yet you dare, before Almighty God, to declare your innocence? Fold your hands and fall on your knees and pray, God be merciful to me a sinner! And now I will tell you something else. It was not Pinetta who lurked after you, but it was you who lurked after him. In your sinful infatuation, you thought if you could put him out of the way, you could secure the bride. Like an assassin, you rushed upon the inoffensive man and buried your stiletto in his breast. Answer me, if you can! justify yourself, if you can! I say, *you are the murderer!*"

But the unhappy Homberg could neither do the one nor the other. At first, he rolled his eyes wildly around, as if wicked, murderous thoughts were passing through his mind. But the more keenly and unsparingly Luther's words penetrated his soul, the more sensibly was he stricken down by the irresistible power of the truth. He threw himself restlessly about on his bed; the wild glare of his eyes was changed into sullen, despairing grief; his breast heaved convulsively, and his whole countenance betrayed the evidence of a conscience aroused to the highest pitch of agony.

"Cease, be still!" he now exclaimed, vehemently. "For God's sake, say not another word! What right have you to interfere with my secret affairs? I have done penance for thirty years. You are a cruel, unfeeling man

to tear open wounds afresh which thirty years' penance had healed. And it is not true, what you say; I was only acting in self-defence."

"*You have murdered Pinetta!*" was Luther's firm reply.

"No, no!" screamed Homberg, in despair. "Who says so? who saw it, that can testify against me?"

"*The dead rise up and testify,*" said Luther. "Be not deceived. God is not mocked. When Cain murdered Abel, the blood of Abel cried to Heaven for vengeance, and God's hand wrote on the brow of Cain, *Thou hast slain thy brother!* Do you think that God's hand-writing can deceive? Know, Sir, that *you* also carry the writing of a righteous and avenging God on your brow, in your looks, in the misery and torment of your heart. Know, Sir, and feel it, that on your face is written, *You have slain Pinetta!*"

Homberg could now no longer resist the force of an accusing conscience. He sprang up from his bed, threw himself on his knees, and wringing his hands in horrible despair, cried out, "*Yes, it is true, I have murdered Pinetta!*" Then he sank down in perfect exhaustion, and hid his face under the cover of his bed.

Luther did not disturb the wretched man, but let the unburdened conscience do its work, until, in his judgment, it would be necessary to proffer his aid in healing the broken heart.

But Homberg did not continue long in this delusive quiet, which was rather the result of exhausted strength than of a peaceful mind. He soon raised himself up, cast an imploring look on Luther, and then spoke with a trembling and interrupted voice: "Doctor Martin, I have often

heard you called thus by those who esteem you highly, — and permit me also thus to call you. I have for a long time avoided you, and never went to hear you preach; but, as well as I can remember, I have never done you any evil. And if I have ever spoken an unkind word of you, I did it inconsiderately, and I would give a portion of my property if it had not happened. I am but an unimportant person in comparison with you; but the people say that I have never despised any one, and have even associated with persons of poor and low condition. Ah! I would be heartily glad if you were not my enemy, but my friend!”

“Dear Master!” replied Luther with deep emotion, “How can you conceive such thoughts of me? What induces you to fear that I may be your enemy?”

“Ah!” continued Homberg in anxious haste, “give me your word,—assure me of it, Doctor Martin! I will only say it to you; you are the second person on earth to whom I have revealed my secret. True, I am an old man, but I am afraid of death. I do not wish to die yet. Dear Doctor, be my friend—my patron—my protector. Pity me, and do not betray me to the civil authorities. Disgrace and the horror of death will kill me before the executioner strikes off my head with his sword. Pity me, Doctor Martin! you know I have lost my Catharine. Ah! that pains a father’s heart, and is a dreadful punishment! I am not,” he continued in a subdued tone, “I am not altogether destitute of property. People say that you do not value money or property, but you have a wife and child, and are liberal to others. I will cheerfully give you the half of my property, and more, too, if you will accept of it,—only do not betray me; do not give me up to the executioner. I will from this time forth be an upright and

honest man. I will defend you and your new worship against every opposer by word and deed. I will do everything you wish,—only spare me; do not betray me to the magistrate.”

“Poor, poor friend!” said Luther, deeply sympathizing with the wretched man. “If God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but that he turn and live, do you think that I, a poor, sinful man myself, who only lives by God’s mercy, should frustrate His gracious and merciful will in regard to you? *Judgment is the Lord’s.*”

“Yes, yes!” said Homberg. “That I have experienced! You would not believe that I have already suffered the judgment of God. When I fled from Milan, God sent His messengers after me, so that I might not escape. In Tyrol, they overtook me, and threw me into a dangerous fever, so that I thought I should die. And, when, after many weeks, I recovered my senses, the people told me that in my delirium I had spoken a great deal of nonsense, and that I had murdered a man. Then I sent for a priest, and told him that all I had said during my sickness was false, and I gave him two gold pieces to pay him for reading several masses for my recovery. And after eight days, I was able to rise from my bed, as may be supposed, very infirm; but I improved in strength every day, so that I could at last continue my journey.”

Luther shook his head with earnest disapprobation, and asked, “And that was all that you did? That was the whole of your contrition and repentance?”

“O no! no!” replied Homberg with energy. “I did everything which the holy mother church prescribed. As I had no peace of mind, and the unfortunate Pinetta stood before me day and night, and called me his murderer, I

went finally to a priest in Augsburg, and confessed my sin, and submitted to all the penances, and did everything that I might only procure absolution. When I had received that, for a few days I felt better, but it did not continue. Pinetta always came again, and appeared to me in my dreams, and grasped at me with his hands to deliver me over to the executioner. During the whole day, I was unhappy and full of apprehension; I could not work with any degree of comfort; in the midst of jovial company, which I daily sought, the most horrible thoughts arose in my mind, and everything which I ate or drank, was like poison, which consumed my life and yet did not kill me."

"And what was your contrition and repentance?" asked Luther. "And whereon was the conscious peace of pardoned sin founded?"

"I was to acquire the grace of God by *good works*. So I was taught," replied Homberg. "And I did not fail in that point. I went to mass every day. I prayed ten rosaries three times daily. I never passed any place for the reception of charitable offerings, where I did not leave a liberal donation. I joined every procession which I met. I often went by myself to numerous images and pictures of saints, and other sacred places, and vowed many gifts and oblations, if I could only obtain peace of mind. I allowed no beggar to go away empty. I visited the poor and the sick in their hovels, and performed many good works towards them. But my troubled mind rose up with me in the morning, and went with me to bed at night."

"Proceed, proceed!" said Luther.

"In my anguish," he continued, "I went again to the priest, and he told me that the grace of God and pardon

of sin could be acquired by *contrition*, and that I should only feel it keenly, and pray my rosary with a truly *broken* heart. This I did also, and I wept and mourned in loud lamentations and sobs, and I smote upon my breast, and called all the saints to witness and to look into my heart, and see how sorry I was — and I told them that I would give all I was worth, if I could only undo what had been done. Often, when I was tired of lamenting and sobbing, and felt disposed to sleep, from pure *exhaustion*, I would violently force myself to wakefulness and press out unwilling tears from my dry eyes. For several nights I had comfortable sleep, but I believe it was the result of bodily weakness,—for, as soon as I somewhat recovered strength again, I felt the same old trouble and anguish of mind. No one can feel deeper contrition than I, but yet it was of no service to me! Sir, for twenty-five years, and longer, have I endured this horrible torture!”

“Proceed, proceed!” exclaimed Luther.

“Yes, Sir!” said Homberg, in still deeper dejection. “I still hear the voice in me, *proceed, proceed still further!* But I will never come to *that* place where there is rest for me and peace for my soul. I went again to the priest, and complained to him of these hellish pangs I felt. He told me it was my own fault that I had not obtained peace, inasmuch as I had too securely reckoned on the pardon of my sins; that I should rather *doubt about it*, whether my sin would be really pardoned or not; for it is written, *No man knows whether he is in favor with God or not*. And if, while entertaining these doubts, I only did *good works*, I would find peace for my soul.”

“Well!” asked Luther, with a dubious shake of the head, “well, did you do that? and did you find peace?”

"Alas! dear Sir!" replied Homberg, "that only increased my misery, and brought me almost to despair. I did not know any more how to doubt; in order to obtain the benefit of it. I tried to doubt the efficacy of the absolution I had received, and to persuade myself that it was not true what the priest had told me, and that it was of no service to me. And I carried this so far, that even when a good thought arose in my mind, I doubted whether it really was a good thought. Ah! dear Doctor, many a time I fancied I would certainly obtain relief, if I were only certain of my damnation. And in this state of doubt, which made me more wretched than the most terrible certainty, I was to perform good works! That I could not do; for I now also doubted whether the works which I regarded as good, were really so or not."

"Proceed, dear master, proceed further!" repeated Luther, with agitated voice.

"Oh, Sir! do not mock my misery!" entreated Homberg, and covered his face with both his hands.

"I do not mock you," said Luther. "*I am only living over again my own misery with you.* Yes, my friend, all this mental torture I also have endured. And because I know that it cannot cease by these means, and that finally the true consolation must ensue, I am very much concerned about you. Believe me, I have experienced to the full the agonies of a disturbed conscience, which knows not the way of peace. So then, proceed, dear master!"

"I went to the priest," he resumed, and represented to him my mental sufferings, and entreated him on my knees, and amid tears, to help me in securing comfort in the pardon of my sins. The priest then rebuked me, and accused me of not believing holy mother church, which

had power to change *eternal* punishment into *temporal*, and on this account prescribes and enforces satisfaction and penance on the sinner, so that his sins may be forgiven if he submits to these penances and self-mortification with an obedient heart. And as I would not believe this, because I had already faithfully performed all these penitential works, he severely rebuked me again, and charged me with committing other sins which I had not yet confessed, and which for this reason were not yet forgiven. Then I tortured my conscience to excess, and told *everything* sinful I had ever done or omitted to do. I even imagined *new* sins, which I had never committed or even thought of, and confessed them. And during this almost insupportable mental agony, I became sick, and thought I should die; and death was almost welcome to me. But it was not God's will; I recovered, and rose from my bed in a very sullen state of mind. I persuaded myself that my sins were not so great, and that I had a right, as well as other men, to live and be happy. I conceived Pinetta to be my enemy, who interfered with my happiness. I persuaded myself that his death was the work of chance and self-defence; and I plunged into the dissipations of the world. This afforded me some peace. I then came here to Wittenberg, opened a work-shop, and married a wife. When my first child, Margaret, was born, I observed that there was a covering over her eyes, and that the child was blind. Sir, the grief of my wife distressed my own heart, and all the false peace, which I had violently secured, vanished in a moment. 'Your sins are not yet forgiven,' said I to myself. 'This is the curse of your crime, which pursues you even in the blindness of your child.' Sir, believe me, I begged God and all the saints to take this

child away again. But, to my unspeakable grief, Margaret grew up, and was not even attacked by sickness, although hundreds of other children died. Before my second child was born, I went one day and threw myself before the holy virgin, and vowed that I would erect an altar to her, and give her the half of my property, if she would take away this child, the blind accuser of my crime ; or, if I was compelled to keep Margaret, I prayed that the birth of a child, sound in body, should be a sign that my sins were forgiven. And so it happened. When I took Catharine into my arms, and saw her beautiful form, and her clear, sparkling eye, I wept for joy that my vow had been accepted ; and I blessed the child, and received it as the sign and seal of forgiveness with God. Catharine grew up, and continued to be the delight of my eyes and heart ; and as often as blind Margaret crossed my path, and by her sightless eyes disturbed my conscience by reminding me of my sin, I called Catharine to me, and, pressing her to my heart, I drank, like one famishing, peace and contentment out of her clear, lustrous eyes."

"That cannot be the end yet!" said Luther, as Homberg ceased speaking from exhaustion. "Now, more earnestly than hitherto, I call on you to *proceed, proceed!*"

"Yes, you are right!" replied the master ; "that was not the end of it. The death of my wife pierced my soul, as if thrust by the hand of the avenger, but I overcame the violence of my feelings, and obtained a forced peace by looking on Catharine. Then, Doctor Martin, you came with your ninety-five propositions against false contrition and repentance. At first I favored you and your cause, because I presumed I would also like to be free from the chains of the church which loaded my conscience ; yea, to

tell you the whole truth, I fondly thought that your doctrine would abolish the church penalties, and the church itself, and deliver us all from the fear of God and his judgment. I felt inclined to favor you as an opponent of the Pope and papal power; as a new prophet, who would teach, *Fear not God any longer, for there is no God.* That would have been gratifying to me. But, as I soon observed that if I embraced your doctrine it would be worse with me than before, and that I would then only begin properly to fear God and His judgment; and, moreover, that I would have to become quite a different man, I hated you and your doctrine, and returned again to old mother Church, who would make my repentance light, and sell me forgiveness of my sins for a stipulated price!"

"Yes," said Luther, half soliloquizing, "the world and the devil have tried to frustrate my work in many ways. They have accused me of everything wicked, and yet, amid all their diabolical opposition, this is my comfort, *God and His word; His word alone!* But, dear Sir, you cannot yet be at the end — speak on."

"But I shall soon be at the end," he hastily replied. "Do not believe, dear Doctor, that I have been blind and dumb to everything you have spoken and done during these ten years here at Wittenberg. The more distinctly I understood what you were aiming at, the more I hardened myself on account of my sin. I knew that if I were to join you, I could no longer deceive myself or you; that I would have to confess the whole burden of my sins, and expose all my misery, *and that I would not do.* I would not humble myself! Just at that time Leonard Fichtner came; his name, his appearance, the tones of his voice, all rose up in judgment against me. I do not even yet

know the dreadful secret associated with this man, and yet I imagine it. But, on his first entrance into my house, I felt that my hour had come. Oh! Sir, I do not wish to speak of the dreadful conflicts I have endured since that time. I am always as if I were going mad when I think of it. There must have been a period in my life when I was corporeally and spiritually dead. I know that I was only restored to life at the death-bed of my Catharine! Sir," he continued, in extreme agitation, "when I saw my child lying dead, her beauty spoiled and ruined by the plague, all of a sudden I felt that all my previous consolation was false and feigned, and that I was nothing else but a lost sinner, deserving death and damnation! If you have any comfort for me, oh! give it to me. But soon, soon,—it appears to me as if my hours were numbered. Oh, Sir, I can say nothing more—I am completely exhausted."

And the old man sank back on his bed, perfectly helpless.

"Be not afraid!" exclaimed Luther. "You will not die. You have only rolled away the burden which you have so long borne in despair. Now you begin to feel that you are also weak in body. Be still and hope, and you shall become strong. Then we shall renew this subject, and express our views freely."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE STRUGGLE.

Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. — GAL. ii. 29.

WHEN Homberg had recovered from his exhaustion, Luther thus addressed him: "Your confession, dear master, has brought back to my memory the whole melancholy period of papal blindness through which I myself have lived. What you have related of yourself, I also have suffered, and probably to a greater degree. You desire to receive solid comfort from me;—now, hear how I obtained it for myself, in the day of my necessity."

"Sir," said Homberg, interrupting him, "have you also really borne such a burden as I?"

"If you mean to ask," replied Luther, "whether in the same manner I violated the sixth commandment, as you have done, then my burden would certainly be lighter than yours. But, my friend, when once the conscience is disturbed and alarmed before the righteousness of God, and cannot attain to peace, the wretchedness and fear of all men may be great enough to embitter life. If our sin is great, so will our punishment be; but so also the grace of God."

"I know very little about the Scriptures," said Homberg; "but there is one passage which I have often quoted

to myself, and which has often afforded me consolation. It is that which Christ said of the woman who anointed him: 'Much is forgiven you, because you loved much.' For see, Sir, it was nothing but love that impelled me to commit that evil deed. If I had not loved that young lady of Milan so dearly that I thought I could not live without her, I never would have been guilty of that great sin. And then, you may believe me, Doctor, I do not wish to boast, but during my life I have done many charitable deeds. I have always aided the poor and needy. I have a truly philanthropic heart. I have never served others for the sake of mammon. I can truly say, *I have loved much.*"

"Poor friend!" sighed Luther. "With such consolation, you will not proceed far — for it is *false* and delusive, and rests on a *false* interpretation of the Word of God. Christ does not mean that many sins will be forgiven him who performs many charitable works; but that he who does many deeds of mercy, thereby shows that he has already received the comforts of pardoned sin. Works of mercy are the *fruits* of pardoned sin, but not the *cause* of God's grace. Where there is pardon, there are life and happiness; there is *much love*—the heart *must* love much, because it is so greatly loved of God. We are not justified before God by our good works; but on the other hand, *our good works are only evidences that we have been justified through grace and for Christ's sake. Before the heart is reconciled with God, it cannot perform any works acceptable to Him.* True love to God, which keeps God's commandments for God's sake, proceeds only from true faith in God, that is, from faith in the forgiveness of our sins through Christ."

"Ah! Sir!" exclaimed Homberg with joyful trembling, "I do not yet exactly understand what you say; but, as far as I comprehend it, it imparts a peace to my mind such as I have not known before. Now, Sir, I can call on you and say, *proceed, proceed!*"

"I said," continued Luther, "that my mental torture was similar to yours; so may you also secure the same peace of mind to which I have attained. St. Paul writes to the Romans, ch. i., that in the gospel of Christ, the *righteousness of God is revealed*. And this phrase, *the righteousness of God*, was the occasion of the severest struggle of my whole life. It offended me, and I wished I could obliterate it from the Bible. I, a poor, foolish, blind man, did not know, at that time, that in these words lay the only real comfort of all poor sinners. How did I then understand this phrase? I thought it meant *that God was righteous for Himself—that He always does that which is just for Himself—that He cannot do that which is unrighteous*,—and, on this account, punishes all sinners and unrighteous persons. If I had thought that sinners and the unrighteous were *only such* who committed murder, adultery, theft, and slander, I might have *consolated* myself by the words. I had never purposely broken any of these commandments. I lived, if I may thus speak, as a holy, irreproachable monk, and did even *more* than was prescribed for me—and there was not one among my brethren or superiors who could accuse me of any open sin. But yet I had *no rest—no peace* of mind. With all my good works, I felt myself a great sinner before God. My conscience troubled me to such an extent that I took no pleasure in anything around me, and day and night I was a wretched man!"

"And why," asked Homberg, "could you not comfort yourself on the ground of your good works?"

"Ah!" replied Luther. "I had no confidence in them. That phrase, *the righteousness of God*, marred all the excellency of my good works. I fasted, and starved myself almost to death. I inflicted all sorts of torture on my body. I practised vigils to complete exhaustion. I subjected myself to the most humiliating and painful self-mortifications, such as few men ever did before. I shed bitter tears of contrition. But all was of no avail. I said to myself, You are still a great sinner before God, and with all your pious acts and the merit of your good works, you cannot satisfy the demands of divine justice! And the more I practised penance in this way, the more unhappy did my mind become, and this righteous and angry God, who punishes sin, I could not love. I rather hated him, and although I never expressed my feelings, yet I was secretly angry with God. I often spoke thus with myself: Is it not enough for God that we poor, miserable sinners, who are already condemned to eternal death by our original sin—who endure the terrors and threats of the law, and groan under all the sorrows and troubles of this life—is not all this enough, that He should yet *increase* our misery and wretchedness by the *gospel*, and proclaim His righteousness which punishes sin and condemns the sinner to hell? Of what benefit is the *gospel*, if it makes our miserable life still more miserable? Of what benefit is *Christ*, if He only judges and condemns us, instead of delivering and saving us? Ah! dear friend, you never have suffered severer mental agony than I have. I sometimes grew furious in my distracted conscience, and became incensed at the Scriptures, and at my dear St. Paul, whom I otherwise

loved so heartily, and even at God. Ah! how often did I ask myself the question, What does St. Paul mean by the expression, *the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel?* Has it not already been revealed by Moses and the Prophets? If we already knew from *the law* that before the righteousness of God we are all poor, lost sinners, of what use is the *gospel*, which declares nothing new or better, but only *confirms* and *enhances* the wrath of God?"

Luther here relapsed into silence, as though he would mentally live over again this hardest period of his life—this *first act of the regeneration of his soul*—this foundation-stone of his reformation work; not, indeed, with trembling and fear, as at first, but with a holy joy *at the acknowledged and appreciated mystery of the redemption in Christ.*

"You have awakened strong emotions in me!" said Homberg now. "Now I begin to feel, for the first time, the anguish of my heart! not only my crime, but *my sin in general*—my *sinful nature*—the burden of *original sin*, which I share with all men, and which a righteous God must punish, *because we are all sinners*,—all these now condemn me before God. Poor, unhappy man that I am! how could I, with all my penance, *make void* the righteousness of God? Speak on, dear Doctor! Like one ready to perish with thirst longs after a cup of water, so I long after the solution of this mystery!"

Luther, with his countenance lighted up with holy joy, thus continued; "Day and night I spent in this painful state of mind, until, by divine grace, I observed the connexion of the words in St. Paul's writings. He speaks thus: 'For therein (the gospel) is the righteousness of God revealed; for it is written, the just shall live by

faith!' Now I, poor, blind man, observed for the first time, that this righteousness revealed in the gospel is not that which punishes the sinner and the unrighteous, but *that by which, through the grace and gift of God, he becomes justified who lives by faith alone.* Thus, my dear St. Paul intends to say, *By the gospel is revealed that righteousness which is effectual before God, by which God, out of pure grace and mercy, justifies us through faith in His dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.* As it is written, *The just shall live by faith.* When I comprehended this, I felt as if I were born again: and it seemed to me as if, at the same time, a large wide door were opened to me, by which I could enter Paradise. Now, too, the sacred Scriptures appeared to me in a different light than formerly; now I went through the whole Bible with a joyful, happy mind; and everywhere I found nothing but a confirmation and strengthening of my comfort. From this time first did I observe a beautiful and glorious harmony in the whole book of revelation; the real difference between the *law* and *gospel*, and I now had some conception of *the joy in heaven over a sinner who repents.* Now, the language of Scripture became plain; now I understood that the expression, *God's work*, is the *work* which He does in us; *God's power*, is the power with which He makes us strong and vigorous; *God's wisdom*, that by which He makes us wise; *God's Glory*, that by which He *glorifies* us; and thus, as I before hated the phrase, *God's righteousness*, I now began to regard it as the sweetest and most consoling; and this whole passage in Paul became really the gate of Paradise to me!"

"And to me also!" exclaimed Homberg, in the highest state of happy excitement. "Yes," he continued, whilst

tears copiously rolled down his cheeks, "yes, that must be an eternal, saving truth! I never conceived that a human heart was capable of the happy emotion which at this moment fills my soul. From this time forth, I also know that my Redeemer liveth, and that I have pardon of my sins in Christ, my only Saviour and Mediator. From this time forth I know that all my groans, and tears, and lamentations,—all my penitential works,—all my fasting and alms-giving, could be of no service, if I did not believe that God, through grace alone, and for the sake of His Son, forgives my sins, and justifies me in His sight. Oh! how happy I feel! How I now will love the Lord my God, since I know how much He loved me in His Son!"

Luther smiled in the happy recollection of his own experience, and said, "Once, when I was yet a papist, and Doctor Staupitz was administering the Sacrament, I was so terribly alarmed at the sight of the crucified One, that I could scarcely contain myself, and it was some time before I recovered my composure. When I afterwards complained of this to that dear man in the confessional, he consoled me, and said: 'It is not Christ who alarmed you; *for Christ does not terrify, He only comforts.*' These words were of great service to me, but it was only afterwards that I understood their import fully. For Christ is only then the greatest comfort for the poor and miserable, when we know and believe that He is *everywhere* present, and that He *is* and *will be* with us to the end of time, as He has promised. *Our only comfort is believing in Christ.* Out of Christ no one can receive consolation, or counsel, or help."

"And this consolation," asked Homberg, in evident

expectation of an affirmative answer, "is given to all who believe in Christ? and which, you say, I also may *take to myself*, with all my grievous sins resting upon me?"

"*Beware of doubting of it*," replied Luther. "When you hear me, or any other minister of Christ, comforting you with God's own words, you should as certainly believe in them, as if you heard God himself speaking with you from Heaven. For I, as a chosen steward of the mysteries of God, have power and commandment from Him to comfort you, and declare to you the forgiveness of your sins, for Christ's sake!"

"Oh, Sir," said Homberg, imploringly, "I most heartily long after the confirmation of that comfort which arises from a sense of pardoned sin; and as I know that I cannot be more certainly assured of it than through the reception of the Sacrament, so teach me how I may receive true absolution, having previously confessed my sins in a proper, Christian manner."

"All your confession and absolution," said Luther, "will amount to nothing, if you do not place your greatest confidence in the mercy and promise of God, and *firmly believe* that Almighty God will forgive your sins out of pure grace and love. When you say, 'For Thy name's sake, O Lord, be merciful to me!' your whole soul must be full of the conviction, *that God can, and will be gracious to you.*"

"Oh!" responded Homberg, "what an unhappy man I would be if I doubted that! If faith were all that is necessary, then I could be comforted and certain. But my sins are so great and numerous, and although I already know that the eye of God penetrates into the depths of my soul, yet I also know that it is necessary to confess

my sins to the priest, who, by the command of God, is to declare absolution."

"You must, of course, confess your sins," said Luther; "but, before you confess to man, if you think that important at all, *you must first go into your chamber, and there, where no eye but God's sees you, and no ear but His hears you, make your confession to Him in all sincerity and devotion.* And this you must do with the same diligence and earnestness as though you were lying on your knees before the judgment-seat of the Divine Majesty."

"And what sins shall I confess?" asked the penitent.

"All that you feel in your heart and conscience," said Luther. "You must distinctly acknowledge to a righteous God, not only your actual transgressions, but also your sinful thoughts and inordinate affections!"

"And is it really true," continued Homberg, "as the church teaches, that those sins cannot be forgiven which are not confessed?"

"Certainly is it true," replied Luther; "but only in this sense, when you *purposely* conceal wicked thoughts and actions. For that is a proof that you are not yet truly and really penitent, and that you are entertaining the terrible delusion that God could be mocked. He who *knows* that he has sinned, and does not acknowledge it, and is not sorry for it, will never be forgiven. Repentance is nothing without reformation. Hence, every man who wishes to confess, must most earnestly and sincerely resolve to amend his life, to avoid all sin, and constantly to struggle against his besetting infirmity, because that incites him to the commission of the greatest sins. If you wish to confess, without such a firm determination, it would not only be useless, but dangerous, *for a man who does*

not resolve to lead a godly life will fall under the condemnation of God, how often soever he may confess and be absolved !”

“Oh, dear Sir !” replied Homberg, “I have made this resolution, but how can I confess *all* my sins ? What a heavy burden lies on my conscience from my youth up to the present time ! I have forgotten many of the favors which God has done me, but still more of the sins which I have done myself !”

“You should not allow that to torment you,” rejoined Luther. “David says, ‘Who can know how often he sins !’ You are to confess those sins only which oppress your conscience, the rest you may pass by, for it is impossible for a man to confess *all* his sins. Only beware not to think of yourself as though you had committed *many* sins, but *not such* as deserve death or condemnation, for that would be the *most heinous sin unto death*, if you *fancied yourself free from it*. I know well enough how you have been taught in the papacy to torment yourselves with enumerating and distinguishing between sins ; to set up an elaborate register of offences, with a minute account of circumstances ; to calculate your offences, first, according to the five senses, and then according to the seven mortal sins, and all this was so onerous that one might well tremble, not at the punishment of the sins, but at the severe labor of confessing them. What a dreadful agony and torment all this occasioned the poor soul ! *Lay all this aside !* Give it up as unscriptural and superfluous ! The publican smote his breast, and said, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner !’ and went to his house *justified*. But, as a general confession is without profit and a blessing if you do not-remember all your individual offences, look on your

heart and life in the light of the Ten Commandments, and see how you have violated them. I apprehend that this register would be *large enough*. And let it not trouble you that you have forgotten this or that transgression. Even if they are forgotten, yet they are forgiven. For God has no respect to the systematic order and precision of our confession, but only to the sincerity of our penitence and faith in His word. And if a priest in his absolution, were to say, 'Some of your sins are forgiven, and others are not,' he would not be a true servant of Christ. In the pardon of sin the free and full declaration is made, that God is merciful; and if God is merciful, then *all* sins must be taken away. *According to your faith, be it unto you."*

"That is very consoling to him who believes," said Homberg. "Now I am sure that I also believe; but I am so weak, and can scarcely comprehend how Christ died on the cross also for my sins. "Oh! dear Sir, teach me how properly to consider the death of Jesus!"

"Well, the first view of the cross of the Lord Jesus is certainly no pleasing one to us!" answered Luther. "I can never see Christ on the cross, that my soul is not terrified and my conscience tormented; for, in the crucified Lord, I see the dreadful indignation of God against sin and the sinner; and it is displayed in this, that God would not allow His own dear Son to release men from the guilt of sin unless he himself endured its punishment, first in his own body, as it is written in Isaiah, 'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all!' What will then become of me, a poor sinner, if the only-begotten Son was thus 'smitten' and 'bruised?' When I seriously and profoundly think of the fact, that God's Son, the eternal

wisdom of the Father, himself suffered, I cannot avoid being alarmed on account of myself."

"Ah, dear Sir!" exclaimed Homberg, very sadly, "there is a little comfort in that; for, if Christ bore the iniquity of us all, did he not bear *my* sin also?"

"Certainly!" Luther assured him. "No genuine Christian should doubt that he personally contributed to the sufferings of Christ. Every one has participated in them by his sins. If you are alarmed about this, dear friend, it will be for your benefit. When St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declared to the Jews, '*Ye have crucified the Lord of glory,*' three thousand whom these words alarmed enquired, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' When you see the pierced hands of the Lord, and the crown of thorns on his head, it will do you no harm if you at the same time think, my sinful thoughts and words also occasioned this agony of our Lord. It will also be of service to you, if for every thorn that pierced the head of Christ, you feel *ten or a hundred in your own heart, so that the sufferings of Christ may not be lost on you.*"

"But all that yet gives me no comfort," said Homberg. "It casts down my soul, and wounds me even to death!"

"But only the more thoroughly to heal your wound, and to raise you up again. I have experienced the same thing in myself, and it was also thus with our dear St. Bernard. He long thought he was secure, and knew nothing of the eternal condemnation that had been passed on him in heaven, until he saw that God's only Son had mercy on him; stepped forward, as it were, and assumed this condemnation for him. If God is so uncompromising that His infinite justice compelled Him to *let Christ die to save me*, verily there is no room for *trifling or security!*

It is this that Christ meant when he said to the weeping women, 'Weep not for me, but for yourselves and your children!'"

"What a dreadful state my mind is in!" exclaimed Homberg, in the deepest sadness.

"Thank God that it is so," replied Luther; "for the most valuable benefit of the sufferings of Christ consists in this, that thereby we attain to a *knowledge of ourselves*, and become alarmed at the melancholy condition of our own corrupt nature. As long as the view of our Lord from the cross does not penetrate the depth of your heart and conscience, and give you an insight into their depraved state, the sufferings of Christ will be of no service to you. **This** is the meaning of the phrase '*to suffer with Christ*;' that is, *to feel in the misery of our sins all his sufferings in us.*"

"Oh, Sir! how can I do that?" asked Homberg. "I have no language to express the painful emotions of my heart!"

"Many words are not necessary!" said Luther. "Only be sincerely and heartily convinced of your personal guilt. You say that nothing affords you any comfort. Ah! dear Sir, you would then only have reason to fear, if your heart were so hard and obdurate, that the sufferings and death of Christ awakened no alarm in you; and did not lead you to a knowledge of yourself. For this is the condition of divine grace and our exaltation with Christ, that we *suffer* with Christ, and feel the tortures of the crucified One in the consciousness of our sins. 'If we would reign with him, we must also suffer with him.' We must be 'like Christ;' and if not in this world, most certainly in the place of torment, where the sinner will be 'like Him' in

enduring unspeakable agonies. Terrible as it is, yet I declare it. Happy the man who at least yet on his dying bed feels alarmed by his sins, and suffers the pain which Jesus endured on the cross. But he who desires a more peaceful death-bed, should not wait until then, but pray God now that his heart may be softened. It is not possible that we of ourselves can thoroughly comprehend and feel the death of our Lord, if God does not awaken it in our heart. In this respect also, 'God worketh both to will and to do.'"

"Ah!" exclaimed Homberg, "how very differently this affects my heart from the contrition and penance which I practised so many years to atone for my sins! Now I just begin to feel how deeply I am fallen, and why all my penitential works brought me no peace."

"Yes," added Luther, earnestly, and in a tone that spoke his own experience, "one day's, one hour's, yes, one quarter of an hour's '*suffering with Christ*,' in this truly evangelical sense, is better than a whole year's fasting, or reading the whole psalter every day, or hearing a hundred masses. Such an appreciation of the death of Christ *essentially* changes our whole nature, and makes us new creatures. It slays the 'old Adam in us,' and represents the groundless peace and confidence of the natural man in their impotency and worthlessness. It makes us feel so unworthy and forsaken, as to compel us to exclaim with Christ, 'My God, why hast thou forsaken us?'"

"Why is it that I must learn all this so late?" said Homberg. "It seems to me that the vigor of youth is necessary to the comprehension of this, and not the infirmity of an old man!"

"O do not fall into a new error!" exclaimed Luther.

"The work of feeling the death of Christ in all its heart-crushing efficacy, is not in our hand. Believe me, dear master, I have been honestly and faithfully engaged in this pursuit for a long time, and although I frequently pray for this knowledge from above, yet I do not always attain it on the spot. But I do not on that account despond, nor give it up. Often it comes, even though I have not particularly prayed for it. God knows what is best, and does as He likes. In a word, the whole matter must be left to Him."

"You speak of this with such a cheerful heart," said Homberg, "as if it were commingled happiness to suffer with Christ; but it has made me sad and desponding; the truth is, I have now less peace of mind than before."

"Be not afraid," cried Luther, cheerfully. "Until now you have only gone through the *martyr week*, and have celebrated a real *Good Friday*—but now we are advancing to a glorious *Easter* and the *Resurrection day* of Christ. If there were no *risen* Lord, a *crucified* one would be of no service. Or, as my dear St. Paul says, 'If Christ is not risen, then is our faith vain. We are yet in our sins.' Hence, my dear old friend, look into the *empty* tomb of the Lord Jesus, and hear how kindly he greets you, and says, 'Peace be with you!'"

"Yes, it must be so!" said Homberg, with a cheerful lighting up of his eyes. "I do not yet behold the full glory of the risen Christ, but I feel that the angels of God have rolled away the stone that lay so many years at the door of my heart, and that would have crushed me. Ah! dear Doctor, now I for the first time observe that a *stifled* conscience is a heavy burden, but an *awakened* conscience is a thousand times heavier. If it were not awfully sinful,

I would say, happy the man who has silenced the voice of his conscience !”

“Yes,” said Luther. “He who brightens and clears his eyes with the gospel, and then looks into his own heart, will truly discover no Paradise, but a wilderness covered with weeds. When a Christian becomes acquainted with himself in this way, and alarmed about his corrupt nature, he must be cautious not to permit this sin with its alarming terrors to cling to his conscience, for it will certainly lead him to utter despair.”

Homberg here suddenly interrupted Luther, and in the most apparent uneasiness of mind, and yet trembling confidence, thus spoke: “Sir, I will say it only to you, you speak the truth. I do not rightly know what then happened—God in Heaven is my witness. You can believe me, dear Sir. I only know that I was in despair, and — yes—it cannot be otherwise ; I must have committed some act of desperation. There is a period of my life, of which I only know that I was dead, — for when I came to life again, everything was different ; and it must have been a long, dreadful night, during which I was dead. You need not tell anybody this, dear Sir !”

“Dear friend,” replied Luther, kindly, “be comforted by this reflection, that the pardon of our sins makes us so happy that it overcomes all shame. Only be not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, if it has become to you the power of God to salvation. Rather compare your present peace with the false and hypocritical peace which you sought and presumed you had found when you were yet in your papal unbelief,—and you will soon feel where alone *true salvation* is to be secured.”

“*Christ alone !*” said Homberg. “These are the words

which awakened me from death to life, — the last words from the lips of my dying Catharine. From these words my *second* life on earth begins. Sir," he continued in an animated tone, "I must tell you that during my *first* life, I was not destitute of a knowledge of sin and its penalty. Yes, I say to you, that before this, I have felt the horror and alarm of sin more keenly than at present. Sin stung my heart like a poisonous serpent, and tortured me like a consuming fire. I burdened myself, as you know, with good works, and all manner of penances. I everywhere sought for absolution. I neglected no pilgrimage. But sin rested like a mountain on my heart; all false security which for a short time gave me peace, vanished like snow before the fire. Ah! now I know, that if I would get free from the burden of sin, I must cast it on Christ."

"Yes, that you must do," said Luther, "if you sincerely believe that Christ's sufferings and wounds are your sins, which he bears, and of which he pays the penalty by the sacrifice of himself. For thus says Isaiah: 'God has laid on him the iniquities of us all, that we might have peace.' St. Paul testifies, 'Christ has borne our sins in his own body on the tree;' and again, 'God hath made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.'"

"And will this peace continue?" asked Homberg.

"If you wish to keep it, yes!" replied Luther. "But you must not presume that this peace is a convenient cushion on which you can repose when you are weary, and which is prepared for you at every period of your life. No, my friend, you must *daily* make up your bed anew; and that you can only do by boldly throwing yourself on the doctrine of the cross,—and the more boldly, the more

severely your conscience torments you. If you do not take this course, but think that by your contrition and penitential acts alone you can silence your conscience, you will never find peace, but you *must* finally despair."

"How is this?" inquired Homberg. "I have experienced the truth of this mystery, but I cannot solve it."

"I will tell you how it is," said Luther. "If we feel our conscience tormented by our sins, and we suffer ourselves to look on them daily as a picture of our fall, and thus cherish them constantly, we shall find that they are too great and numerous, and will annoy us unceasingly. We are thus daily wounded, but never healed—daily cast down, but never raised up. That is a dreadful state of mind; and it is the condition of the human heart which does not know that we have a Saviour and Redeemer. But when we see that these sins which oppress us are borne by Christ, and that He has overcome them by his resurrection, which is a triumph over sin; and when we surely and boldly believe this, our sins are dead and annihilated,—for they could not remain on Christ; they are destroyed by his resurrection. Now we no longer see in Christ any wounds, any pains—that is, nothing more that is sinful. That passage of St. Paul, 'Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised for our justification,' is to be understood thus: Christ by his sufferings and death has made known to us our sins, and has slain them; but by his resurrection he delivers us from them, and thus makes us righteous, or justifies us before God, *if we believe*; for without faith all is vain and idle."

"And how hard it is to believe!" sighed Homberg.

"Faith is the gift of God," added Luther, quickly. "If you wish to believe, and yet *cannot*, pray to God earnestly

and humbly. For faith is altogether in the hand of God, and is freely given to *one* openly, through trouble and sorrow; to *another* secretly, through the silent operation of the Holy Ghost in the Word. Now, my friend, if you have come to a knowledge of your sins, look no longer at the outward sufferings and death of Christ, for they have done their work in you, and have set you before the judgment of God; but, with all confident and cheerful faith, penetrate into the heart of Jesus; behold how he loves you; his love so strong as to compel him to suffer the penalty of your sins. Thus, your heart will become cheerful in Christ, and your confidence will be established. But be not satisfied with this; press forward; grow in grace and knowledge; live near to God, and you will feel and show that you are born again in God!"

"Oh! the Lord bless you for that word!" said Homberg, with a smiling countenance. "That is the real word, *born again!* There's quite a new spirit in me. Not only am I certain that my sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, and that I can now look with hope to the judgment throne of the Lord, but my whole past life has suddenly assumed quite a different aspect. Formerly, I was peevish, discontented and fretful. Nothing was right with me; I found fault with everything and everybody. I murmured against God and His Providence. I charged Him with injustice in the government of the world. I mocked at His mercy, and despised his judgments. God forgive the sins and follies of my youth! But now, all through my life, I observe the evidences of the eternal wisdom and justice of God; the manifest proofs of the Divine goodness and mercy which would not let me perish. Yea, even in the most horrible crime of my youth, the murder of Pi-

netta, and the most dreadful affliction of my old age, the death of my dear Catharine, in all this I observe the wonderful providence of God; and all have been employed by God to lead me to an acknowledgment and appreciation of the love of Christ to me."

Luther regarded this confession with a cheerful heart, and added, "If Christ has solved the mystery of your past life, let Him also be for the remainder of your pilgrimage on earth, a pattern and a guide. But it is scarcely necessary to tell you this, for if our hearts are established in Christ, and we lead godly lives; if we desire to bring forth fruits of repentance, and hate sin, not from fear of its punishment, but from love to Him who first loved us, then will Christ, with his sufferings and death, of himself, be the pattern of our whole life."

"I feel what you mean," said Homberg; "but, dear Sir, explain it a little more distinctly."

"Well," continued Luther, "when we are afflicted, immediately we begin to complain, as if no person in the world suffered more than we. Such unbecoming thoughts are soon dispelled, if we think of the crown of thorns, and the nails which pierced the sacred head, and hands, and feet of Jesus. Surely his sufferings were greater than ours. And thus, I conform my life to the example of Christ. If I am compelled to do something which is unpleasant to me, I think of the bonds and capture of Christ. If I am assailed by *pride and ambition*, foolish servant! what do you aspire to, when your Lord was mocked, and treated like a malefactor? Do *corrupt affections*, and the *lusts of the flesh* rise up in me, or *hatred, envy and revenge* reign in my heart? these passions subside when I set before my eyes the tender, perfectly formed, and beautiful

body of Jesus lacerated by the scourge; and when I think how the Lord, with tears, prayed for his enemies, and for me, hatred, envy and revenge flee away. If my Lord was sorrowful even unto death, should I complain of trouble? You see, my dear master, how a Christian can find strength and comfort in Christ against all the assaults of Satan, the world, and his own flesh. This alone is the proper meditation of His sufferings and death; these are *the fruits of his sufferings*, and he who practises this, acts in conformity with the words of St. Paul, 'And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' "

"Oh, Doctor," said Homberg, "you are leading me into quite a new world. I never imagined that the Gospel was such an overflowing fountain of comfort and wisdom, and that Christ exercised such power!"

"Yes," said Luther, "Christ conducts the affairs of his kingdom wonderfully. Sometimes, as it were, He conceals himself, and it seems as though He had no power or authority, and at the same time He brings down the lofty and the proud. Thus, He brought down you, but only to crown you with honor and joy. He made you feel your misery that you might desire His grace and help, and that He might make you happy. For all this, praise the Lord as long as you live, and openly confess before an ungodly world that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual and eternal. The Christian lives with his body on the earth, but with his heart in Heaven, and waits for the dissolution of the body in the joyous hope of the glorious appearing of his Saviour, Jesus Christ."

Here Homberg extended his hand to Luther, and with trembling voice, said, "May Christ reward you, reve-

rend and dear Sir, for having rescued my soul from destruction. Yes, I was dead, but now I am alive again. And that you may see that my repentance is genuine, do me the honor and the pleasure of going down into my family room, and wait for me. I have risen not only spiritually but bodily. Go down, dear Sir, and be witness of my conversion to God."

Luther complied with the request, and descended the stairs into the family room.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TRIUMPH.

He that hath the Son hath life. — 1 JOHN v. xii.

MARGARET occupied the old place, the darkest corner of the room, clothed in the same gray nun-like dress, the same spinning-wheel before her, from which she skilfully spun out the golden threads. Everything was as formerly, only her sister Catharine sat no longer at the window in her beauty; and the brilliant jewellery which had attracted the attention of passers-by, lay untouched and unused in the drawer.

The whole past, with its sorrows and enjoyments, was presented to Margaret's mental vision, and she was sunk in profound meditation on the mercy and grace of God. "I can only submit to the command and will of God!"

said she to herself. "Thou knowest, Lord, that I would cheerfully have died for her. But besides Thee, no one shall be a sacrifice for another."

She set her spinning-wheel aside, and took up a lute which Leonard had taught her to play. She tuned the strings, and then sang in a faint, sweet voice, a beautiful and heart-stirring hymn.

"How can you yet desire to be my pupil, Margaret?" exclaimed Leonard, who unobserved had entered the room whilst she was singing. "You have become my master! Where did you get that hymn, that with every word transfers the soul to heaven? Confess it; it is your own, for there is but one soul that can immerse itself so deeply into the eternal love of God!"

"Spare your praise!" answered Margaret, whilst she shook her head, thus denying the authorship. "The soul which first conceived and sang that hymn, has long since gone up to heaven!"

"And who is it?" asked Leonard; "who can bear such glorious testimony to his communion with the Lord?"

"*John Tauler* is his name!" answered Margaret; "and two hundred years ago he sang it with a free and loving heart from behind the walls of a monastery."

"Outwardly bound and inwardly free!" said Leonard. "Just as you are, Margaret."

"Because I am blind?" she asked. "Ah! my friend, are we not all outwardly bound and only inwardly free? free in our faith and love to the Lord? Do we not only love him then when we serve him? And he who serves, is he not bound to the will of his master? Even the angels and happy spirits cannot *love* God otherwise than by *serving* Him. Hence, there is but one who *rules*, God

the Lord; all others, who think they rule, are only servants bound to do the will of a superior. And he who will not serve the Lord with property, blood, body, soul, and life, will never learn to love him."

"Ah!" said Leonard, "I cannot follow you to the height of your Christian knowledge and experience. I well know that I love God when I serve Him; but what credit has a will that is bound, if it serves because it is bound? Has not Father Luther but lately spoken a great deal about *Christian Liberty*? I have heard him say myself that man of his own power has a free will?"

"Yes," resumed Margaret, "we have all received from God such a free will, to do or to leave undone external works, according as the law and its penalty drives us to them, or deters us from them. Father Luther called this, as intimated by Paul, *the righteousness of the flesh*; according to which we have choice and liberty to avoid evil and to do good."

"Only continue your preaching, Miss Margaret!" Luther here suddenly said, who had just entered the room through the door which Leonard had left open, and had heard the last observations of Margaret. "Add to it," he continued, in a very friendly tone, "that God *demands* such an outward or worldly righteousness from us. St. Paul teaches that the law is made to control and restrain our outward sins; and, at another place, the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient. The meaning of that is, that we cannot change our hearts by our own strength, but that we can and must avoid *external transgressions*. I cannot always prevent evil thoughts, but I can control my hand that it does no harm, and my tongue that it speaks no evil. Yes, we stand

on the ground of the gospel in declaring that God, whilst He is displeased with a wicked, heathenish life, and will punish it with all manner of temporal plagues and with eternal death, yet He takes delight in such external righteousness, and demands it of every man."

"So a man could *externally* keep the commandments of God?" asked Leonard.

"Yes," replied Luther, "if Satan did not prevent the exercise of this liberty! For when a man is not protected and governed by God, the devil impels him to sin, so that he cannot any longer practise even this outward piety. It is necessary to know this, so that the people may learn how weak and miserable a man is who does not seek help of God. But he who knows and feels this, will ask help of God that Satan's influence may be checked, and that God may graciously protect him, and bestow on him divine gifts."

"And how are we to purify our hearts from such thoughts?" asked Leonard. "Can we do nothing towards creating within us a better spirit?"

"Certainly," said Luther, "only not by *our own* strength; because no man possesses within himself these divine gifts. For *genuine* repentance for sin, *genuine* fear of God, *true* faith, *cordial* love, purity of mind, freedom from envy and revenge, unshaken patience under the severest trials, humble prayer, confidence in God, — all these are not the natural product of the human heart, but *exclusively the perfect gifts of God*. For St. Paul says, 'The carnal mind cannot be subject to the law of God; it neither observes nor understands the righteous judgment of God, and hence it does not fear God rightly; it does not comprehend God's goodness, and hence it does not

trust nor believe in God rightly.' What, then, remains to be done, but that men pray to God earnestly and diligently to bestow on us those heavenly gifts? This is *Christian piety*."

"How people do abuse their Christian liberty!" observed Leonard. "On my travels through Germany, I everywhere met persons who thought liberty consisted in destroying human government, and in giving and doing nothing more than their own corrupt hearts prompted. Again, others thought that liberty consisted in eating flesh on fast-days, in not going to confession, and performing no acts of penance."

"Yes," said Luther, "the adversary occasions that: he will not allow his kingdom to be diminished. For Christian liberty is freedom from the power of the devil; that is, through the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake, without any merit of our own, through the operation of the Holy Ghost. Such liberty is, of course, only appreciated by pious souls, and it incites them to the love of God and the performance of good works. But those who are not thus guarded by the Holy Ghost, are under the influence of Satan, who leads them into all sin. This is the primitive *captivity of the flesh*, from which we are redeemed only by the Holy Spirit, whom Christ has promised us; for He says, 'If the Son make you free, you are free indeed.'"

This conversation was continued to some extent; and just as Luther had concluded a reply to Leonard's question on the obligation of the Christian to human government, Homberg entered the room.

"Margaret, my child, where are you?" he exclaimed, in a trembling voice. And when he observed her in the

corner of the room, he hastened towards her, pressed her to his bosom amid tears, and said, "Margaret, you are the angel of my house, and I am the deeply-fallen sinner. Your blindness was indeed a curse and penalty, *but for me alone*. You, innocent lamb, were destined to take my sins on yourself, that I might be rescued. How long I have resisted the gracious will of God! The death of *that* child, which I could only presume to love when I hated you, has been the means of opening my eyes, and seeing how deeply I have fallen. If I did not know that God had received Catharine to Himself, even now, in my present regenerated condition, I should be unhappy and disconsolate. Margaret, I know that you have forgiven all the wrong I have ever done you; you, faithful, pious child, could not hate even the tyrannical father who cursed you in his folly. Margaret, just as when instigated by Satan I drove you from my door as the curse of my heart, my life and my house, now, as a man regenerated, and impelled by the Holy Ghost, I draw you to my heart, and say, *You visible blessing, given me of God; you richest evidence of God's grace, remain with me!* Now I will serve *with you* the same Lord! now I am *happy with you* in the same hope. Margaret, my *earthly jewel*, recognize in this paternal kiss all the love and confidence which for twenty years I have denied you. He who loves you loves me; he who blesses you, blesses me!"

When he here ceased, from pure exhaustion, he heard from Margaret no other reply than silent weeping. "My father!" she finally exclaimed, and reclined her head on his breast; and no other word escaped her lips. "And you," turning to the young man, "and you—your entrance into my house was the beginning of my greatest difficulty,

of my deepest fall—but also of my deliverance. I imagine who you are, although an unwelcome gloom settles over my joyous heart in anticipating your reply. Tell me your real name.”

“My name is that of my dear, good father,” replied the youth with much excitement. “My name is Leonardo Pinetta, and my home is Milan.”

When Homberg heard this, his knees trembled, and could no longer support him. He sank down and wept aloud like a child. He folded his hands, and elevating them towards heaven, cried out, “Merciful God, I am not worthy of such a favor!”

“Yes, my father still lives!” continued Leonard, whilst with the assistance of Luther he raised Homberg from the floor. “Rejoice with me! My father sends to you through me the salutation of forgiveness and affection. And my sainted mother, who two years ago fell asleep in the Lord Jesus, sent you her blessing on her death-bed, — and this has brought me to Wittenberg.”

“O cease! cease!” exclaimed Homberg, and grasped his head with both his hands. “This is too much joy! Let me hear it by degrees, so that I be not overcome by its fullness!”

He threw himself on a chair exhausted, and wept and smiled by turns like a happy child.

“Leonard!” said Margaret, sinking down her head so low that her chin touched her breast. “Leonard, I hold to my word, and in the presence of my dear father, whose consent I now humbly implore, I say to you, if you will be my lord and master, I will be your faithful, loving servant!”

“Life of my soul!” exclaimed the young man, and grasping her with both hands, he bowed with her at the

feet of the father. "Can you, will you bless us?" he asked.

But Homberg made no reply. He embraced them both, pressed them to his heart, and wept and laughed by turns. But Luther, deeply moved at the scene, drew nearer, laid his hands upon the happy couple, and said: "May Christ, the Lord and bishop of our souls, who has bought you with his blood, preserve you in the true faith — may you grow in grace and knowledge of Him! May He comfort and strengthen you, so that you may continue firm amid all trials. May He hear your prayers and graciously fulfil your desires and longings after His glorious appearing at the last day! May He reveal to you the glorious liberty and happiness of the children of God, and give you patience to the end. To all this, let your hearts, which now love Christ, heartily respond, Amen! amen!" And the three cordially together responded, Amen! amen!

THE END.

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